

SHOCK CINEMA

NUMBER 4

\$3 (\$4 w/postage - \$5 overseas)

Your Guide to Cult Movies,
Arthouse Oddities,
Drive-In Swill, and
Underground Obscurities!

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PATHECOLOR

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS: It's been a busy year for me, folks, so you'll have to excuse the extreme lateness of this issue of SHOCK CINEMA. I had originally hoped to have this fourth edition out in early '92, but various projects and my addiction to NYC nightlife kept diverting my attention. Not to mention changing my address once again. After dealing with Brooklyn for a year (more on that debacle later in the editorial), I finally got smart, packed up my shit and moved into the bowels of the East Village, which I learned is the only place on earth where I've ever felt completely comfortable. So here's that **NEW mailing address: SHOCK CINEMA, c/o STEVE PUCHALSKI, P.O. BOX 518, PETER STUYVESANT STATION, NEW YORK, NY 10009.** And despite ever-increasing beer prices, I've managed to keep the cost of this mag the same, at a cover price of \$3, with U.S. mail orders at \$4 apiece and overseas at \$5. And please remember to make **ALL** checks and money orders out in my name (NOT the magazine), because I'm not wasting my time & money sending it back to you, Einstein.

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY: As regular readers of SHOCK CINEMA must know all too well by now, this magazine has no definite publication schedule. The only thing I promise (unless I'm dead) is that I'll get one issue out every year. If you want to feel secure in the knowledge that you won't miss a single issue of this rag, you can send cash for future editions and I'll gladly put you on my mailing list...If you're wondering about back issues of SHOCK CINEMA, I still have some copies of #3, but the first two are still **SOLD OUT!** So don't even ask. (Then again, if you're willing to pay a LOT for 'em, I won't mind if you ask...)

As always, I'm happy to trade issues of SC with any other film 'zine editor. Since it's been almost a year since the last issue, and since my filing system consists of a large cardboard box full of letters, 'zines, assorted scraps of paper, and empty aluminum cans, I might've (accidentally) dropped you from my mailing list. Sorry. If so, get back in touch...Plus, I'll keep my standard offer open. If any readers have videos, films, audio tapes, mags, et cetera, which you'd like to have reviewed in SHOCK CINEMA, send 'em to me and I'll gladly give 'em a look and a plug.

In SC#3 I bitched about the paltry pickings for my regular FILM FLOTSAM section. Personally, I like the idea of having an open forum where readers and other 'zine editors can pass on info about their favorite, overlooked movies. Unfortunately, not too many folks have been taking me up on the offer. For this edition, the response was a little better, though I always appreciate more input from the masses (because then I don't have to write as much myself)...There's also the usual mix of film reviews: Cult, horror, science fiction, arthouse insanity, and a slew of independent work from wonderful new filmmakers working out of their parents' basements. All the lost gems and should've-been-lost garbage you've come to expect from SHOCK CINEMA. And hopefully I've found some real oddities to amuse you with this time around. (One friend of mine looked at the list of films I was reviewing, and responded with "I've never HEARD of most of these things!" That's just as it should be.)

Now that all that official rubbish is out of the way, onto the important stuff, like all my excuses for why it took nearly a year to get another issue done...First off, my search for a new apartment and long-awaited move into the Village sucked up a lot of time. And now that all my favorite haunts (Downtown Beirut, Brownie's, Grass Roots, and the Holiday Cocktail Lounge) are all within easy stumbling-home distance, I have a lot less time to watch videos. But the biggest relief was getting the fuck out of Brooklyn—in particular the Park Slope area. Commuting via subway was a bitch beyond belief, especially when you have to drag yourself onto an F train at 4 a.m. while in an altered state, and pray you don't pass out, only to wake up at Coney Island at dawn with your pockets slit. But the most intolerable thing about Park Slope were the yuppie hordes, who swarmed over the place like flies on a steaming cow turd. Some mornings it was enough to make you wanna become a sniper, what [continued on inside back cover]

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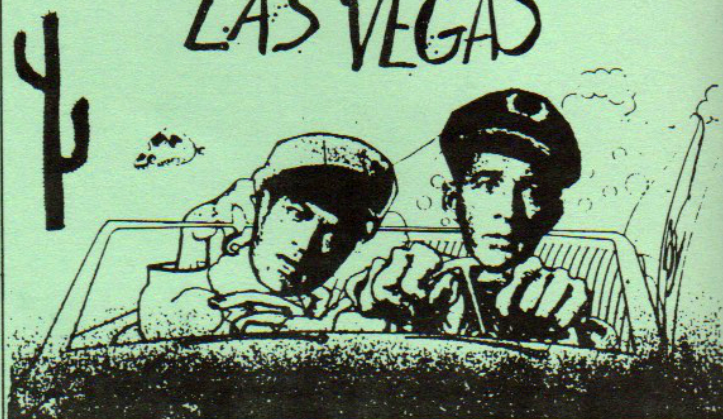
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FILM FLOTSAM

A Forum for Cinematic Obscurities

TRISTER KEANE: TRISTER KEANE'S MAGAZINE.

THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE (1976). Time to pull John Cassavetes down off that pedestal. Most of his films were overlong, overwrought and under-edited, and I'd prefer to watch him in front of the camera (like as the biker leader in *DEVIL'S ANGELS*, or gettin' blown up *REAL* good at the end of *THE FURY*) over suffering through one of his freeform, angst-laden somnambulafests. *CHINESE BOOKIE* is the exception! A gritty, sleazy take on the world of gamblers, hustlers, and general scumbags. Ben Gazzara plays Cosmo Vitelli, the manager of The Crazy Horse West strip club, who in order to pay off his debts to the mob, agrees to off an oriental numbers runner. Grainy, spontaneous, and always bleak, it's almost an anti-movie in the way it avoids ordinary narrative, character development, and any type of audience appeal. Cassavetes once again allows his camera to run and run and run, but the final result is so godawful nihilistic that I had to cheer. Co-starring Timothy Carey.

BLANK GENERATION (1978). Jesus, I'd love to see this movie again. I caught it when it was first released, at a midnight show, and I was so ripped on cheap Piels and skanky grass that I barely remember the fucking thing. Lotsa early NYC punk bands are captured in concert, including Richard Hell and the Heartbreakers, Patti Smith, Talking Heads, Shirts, Ramones, and David Johansen. I also recall that director Amos Poe tried to be really artsy with his camera, by straying away from the performer or simply focusing on their feet.

BONE (1972). Larry Cohen's first film, and an immediate indication of what was to come from this true American auteur. Nobody knew what to make of this pitch black social comedy. The distributor kept changing the title, from *HOUSEWIFE* to *DIAL R FOR RAT* to *BEVERLY HILLS NIGHTMARE*. And most of the critics took it as some kind of blaxploitation film, just because Yaphet Kotto starred in it...Kotto plays a burglar/rapist who surprises a rich couple (Andrew Duggan and Joyce Van Patten), and when hubbie ditches his wife in favor of a hippie chick (Jeannie Berlin), Yaphet and the Missus join forces to go after him. Cohen writes deliciously dark dialogue and though at times technically ragged, the film is unforgettably scathing.

BLACK MOON (1975). French director Louis Malle is best known for pleasant arthouse items, like *ATLANTIC CITY* and *MY DINNER WITH ANDRE*, which appeal to both critics and the snot-nosed intelligentsia. Not this one, which died a sudden death and is without a doubt his oddest concoction. Set in a nebulous time period where men and women are at (literal) war, this futuristic fable often brings to mind Lewis Carroll with its sentient creatures and magical unicorns. Sure, it's sometimes laughably pretentious, but I can always admire an established filmmaker going WAY out on a limb in order to serve up a chaotic hodgepodge such as this. Co-written by Joyce Bunuel, and featuring Joe Dallesandro. The incredible cinematography by Sven Nykvist also helps.

CHAMBRE 666 (1985). Wim Wenders hit the Cannes Film Festival a few years back, set up a camera in Room 666, and then invited a pack of fellow filmmakers to stare straight into the lens and ramble about the future of cinema. It's a great group. Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Monte Hellman, Werner Herzog, Yilmaz Guney, Paul Morrissey, and even (shudder) Steven Spielberg. Some of them are wonderfully articulate, other look confused, and Spielberg naturally makes an ass out of himself by babbling about the joy of big-studio moviemaking.

CHAPPAQUA (1966). Will this film ever resurface? Based in part on his own experiences as a drug addict, director Conrad Rooks takes us to a European clinic and wrings us through his psychedelic landscape with the help of co-stars William S. Burroughs, Ornette Coleman, Allen Ginsberg, Ravi Shankar, and photography by Robert Frank (*PULL MY DAISY*, *COCKSUCKER BLUES*). Over four years in the making, and financed by a half-mil inheritance, it may be pretentious to the point of exhaustion, but it's also a wild time capsule from the days of tripped-out, experimental cinema.

FAST COMPANY (1979). David Cronenberg directing a film about race car drivers? Hard to believe, but Dave loves the friggin' sport! And he populates his tale with drive-in superstars William Smith, Claudia Jennings and John Saxon. It's a silly little diversion, better made than most racing flicks (but that's not saying much), with hero Smith taking on corporate slimebag Saxon. No gore, but lotsa revvin' engines...I'm just glad Cronenberg got this movie of his system early in his career, or else he might've directed *DAYS OF THUNDER PART 2* instead of *NAKED LUNCH*. Shudder.



SERGIO TAUBMANN: STICKY CARPET DIGEST.

INFRA-MAN. Perhaps the greatest film ever made in Hong Kong. Guaranteed to turn your brain into guacamole butter before it's over. Imagine an extended fight scene in a Burt Reynolds movie, only with ridiculous rubbersuits like Cousin It Guy, Fat Spider Guy, Plumbing Supply Guy, and my favorite, the Spring-Action Bowling Ball Head Twins. This film may, in fact, be better than sex.

X—THE UNHEARD MUSIC. The disintegration of one of the greatest bands ever, up close and personal. Pretty much everybody went their

separate ways literally DAYS after this film was released.

SUBSTANCE. Say what you like about New Order, they managed to rope some of the most original artists and directors in to do their videos. Jonathan Demme directs "Perfect Kiss", shoving the camera in every members' face until they're sweating in fear. Robert Longo contributes the video for "Bizarre Love Triangle", which is a masterpiece of editing and image-to-sound correlation, and features one of the best non sequiturs in the history of the '80s ("I don't believe in reincarnation because I refuse to come back as a bug or a rabbit," indeed). Kathryn Bigelow directs "Touched By The Hand of God," in which the band imitates Guns 'N' Roses while Bill Paxton chases after Rae Dawn Chong's car. And William Wegman and Richard Breer overturn the classic "Blue Monday," forcing the band to get down on their collective knees and bark like the dogs that they are. The only one I really regret not having is Michael (PEEPING TOM) Powell's stranger-than-fact "Round and Round". These are the best videos I've ever seen, each one avoiding the cliches of Empty-Vee-isms.

THE CHILLER THEATER OPENING CREDITS and SUSPIRIA COMMERCIAL. If you grew up in New York City in the late-'60s to mid-'70s, these were the two most terrifying moments in your childhood. The former opened up every Saturday evening showing of horror films on Channel 11. A stark landscape of a barren tree, some birds and a crack in the ground gave birth to a monstrous hand which dripped the word "Chiller," before a barely-human voice recited the name of the show. Accompanied by a nightmarish Moog score, it took me months to realize the hand had six fingers. The commercials for SUSPIRIA featured a woman combing her hair and singing a lullaby until she turned her head—and you realized she was a corpse! Both of these pieces of film unnerved me to no end, and I feel it only right that they be preserved

for other generations (Particularly the Chiller Theater opening...it is, without a doubt, a masterpiece of disturbing animation).

TRANCERS. Lean, Mean, and Ready to Kill...75 minutes long and not a moment is allowed to let you think or get bored. Featuring Tim Thomerson from NEAR DARK blowing away Santa Claus, Helen Hunt giving him a Japanese robot toy, and a punk band singing "Jingle Balls".

THE LOVELESS. Bikers Willem Defoe and Robert Gordon wander into Nowheresville, and nothing happens. Kathryn Bigelow gets us so tense waiting for something nasty that when it does come it's almost a relief. Gordon also contributes a kickin' music score.

THE BEGUILLED. This film really went down in flames at the boxoffice; Universal had a problem with the death of Clint Eastwood's character at the end, so they went out of their way to give it minimal support. It sure pisses me off, because this is the most corrupt piece of celluloid Eastwood or director Don Seigel ever did. It's a true American gothic revolving around the Union soldier McBurney (Eastwood) being taken in by a school of Confederate girls. Seigel always keeps us off balance, and some of the scenes are truly gruesome. Incest, lesbianism, amputation, poison mushrooms, dead turtles...It's all here.

HEAD. The best film ever made in 1968 that featured Victor Mature. I dare you to find another one. Davy Jones sings a Harry Nilsson song and dances with Toni Basil. Also features the best non sequitur of the '60s ("Nobody ever lends money to a man with a sense of humor.").

THIRST. Perhaps the most perversely wild and implausible extension of the vampire legend: The Hyma Brotherhood is a secret society of blood drinking international businessmen who run "Farms" where patients are force fed

orange juice before donating a daily (homogenized) pint, which is then delivered to members in milk cartons. The plotoles are the size of small cities, but this Australian meller has a great cast (David Hemmings, Chantel Contouri, Henry Silva) and a subtle, understated style that made it stand out from all the strangoid Australian horror films that emerged in the late '70s.

MILES WOOD: London, England

BABY LOVE (1968) and **SOMEWHERE TO HIDE (1971).** Linda Hayden (familiar to genre fans from TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA) starred in these two films directed by Alistair Reid, who on the strength of these films looked like (along with Nic Roeg and Michael Reeves) he might provide a bright future for the British film industry, and then promptly vanished. There's clearly a peculiar sensibility at work here; a mix of the tragic and the lurid (especially BABY LOVE with its kinky eroticism and a supporting cast including Diana Dors and Dick Emery!!!).

SPECIAL EFFECTS (1984). Most Larry Cohen admirers seem to have little time for this homage to VERTIGO (which returned the amazing Zoe Tamerlis to U.S. cinema screens) probably cuz it didn't have that rough edged home-movie feel to it and therefore didn't fit in with the preconceptions of what a Cohen film should be. In fact it's a sickly shot thriller, but it's also Cohen's most overt comment on the film-making process; and Eric Bogosian makes for a great sleaze bad guy.

BLOODBATH OF DR. JEKYLL / DOCTEUR JEKYLL ET LES FEMMES (1981). Not sure if this Walerian Borowczyk film made it to America; it rarely gets mentioned. A typically idiosyncratic adaptation of the Stevenson story with Udo Kier as Jekyll (but not Hyde) and Boro regular Marina Pierro as his fiancée, it's a bizarre mix of French farce (Patrick Magee is suitably over the top) and Euro erotica, with all the director's usual fetishes and surreal delights. A strange, dreamlike, almost poetic film.

DEADLY BLESSING (1981). Lacking the raw power of LAST HOUSE and HILLS... and not as imaginative as ELM STREET, this is nevertheless the best directed of Craven's movies. A low key supernatural thriller (though the British distributors cut the ending — restored on video), it was ripped off by Peter Weir for WITNESS, but not bettered. There's the original bathtub scare scene (reprised in ELM STREET), some strong female characters, a wild-eyed Ernest Borgnine, Michael Berryman being, well, Michael Berryman, and an early appearance by Sharon Stone (a better reason for seeing any film I cannot think of).

NIGHTDREAMS. Maybe the best porno film ever, from the team that made the over-rated CAFE FLESH. It avoids the boredom factor by basically being a number of short vignettes linked together. There's some of the weirdest visuals ever committed to celluloid (who could forget



CLINT EASTWOOD THE BEGUILLED

a sax playing cereal packet), it's stunningly shot and lit (all blues and reds), has some obscure movie references, some genuinely erotic sex scenes and a great use of music, especially Wall of Voodoo's version of Ring of Fire. [There is now a NIGHTDREAMS 2 & 3 but as I live in England — not the easiest place to get hold of porno films — I've yet to see them. And may never do.]

A CANTERBURY TALE (1944). Wartime propaganda from Powell and Pressburger has some bizarre elements: There's a mystery man at large pouring glue in the hair of young girls out late at night with GI's (a prototype slasher film). But more significantly it's probably the most poetic, almost mystical, piece of cinema you'll ever see. Simple scenes such as walks through wheat fields or the final visit to the cathedral are simply wondrous; melancholic, uplifting, beautiful.

CROSS OF IRON (1977). Not Sam Peckinpah's best film (many studies of the great man simply ignore it) but it may be the best war film ever made. No film hammers home harder its depiction of the sheer brutality of war; it's also superbly shot in muddy browns and bloody reds, and the acting (James Coburn, James Mason, David Warner) is great. I first saw this on a double bill with SUSPIRIA back in the late seventies — my first Argento — what a programme!

PANDORA AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN (1950). Director Albert Lewin is best known for his excellent version of DORIAN GRAY (he also made a film about Gauguin) but this is his strangest film. The legend is updated to '30s Spain (complete with Bullfighting scenes) with Ava Gardner and James Mason (again) as the doomed lovers. There's a visual opulence to this fantasy that you won't find in any other film; extraordinary.

MISTER KEYEZ HANGIN' WITH THE HONKYS

The Keyes Crew has been asked to kick in our choices for the best, weirdest, or funkiest blaxploitation offerings over the years. After killing a few St. Ides 40-ouncers, the Crew loudly tossed back the following:

THREE THE HARD WAY (1974). Yes, the cartoon-like CASINO ROYALE of blaxploits, with Jim Brown, Fred (the REAL Hammer) Williamson, and Jim 'Keyes' Kelly kicking white supremacist butt coast-to-coast. Top of the heap.

TOP OF THE HEAP (1972). Christopher St. John writes, directs, and gets the white mama in this bizarre 1972 entry. St. John plays a cop chastised by his white cohorts, so he drifts into a hallucinatory world of wacked-out watermelon-eating, and heroic exploits as the first black astronaut (complete with a moon landing and nightmarish homecoming). A recent fave.



DETROIT 9000 (1973). This overlooked Motown actioner stars Alex Rocco and Hari Rhodes as overworked Detroit cops out to nail the hoods who robbed a fund raiser, and leave a trail of mayhem in their wake ("Why did they cut his legs off?" "So he'd fit in the trunk!"). Good action, wide lapels, hilarious score. Look for it.

THE HUMAN TORNADO (1976). This unreal Rudy Ray Moore vehicle christened our SLIMETIME column way back in '87. This DOLEMITE sequel had our hands permanently wedged to our foreheads as Rudy mercilessly raps and rhymes whitey to death, and then speeds up the footage in extended slapstick chase action. It just doesn't get funnier than this (Oh, we almost forgot the oversized toy room/dry ice/sex fantasy sequence where Rudy literally bumps ugly until the roof falls in...Smokin!).

DARKTOWN STRUTTERS (1975). William Witney and the demented George Armitage hit the genre upside the head with this incredible blaxploitation parody. It's all here—black biker mamas on furry choppers, klansmen led by a Colonel Sanders-style grand wizard in a pink tutu, a traveling dope dealer with a 'potsicle' cart, singing and dancing (with Temptations choreography) at the drop of a funky hat, and Dick Miller. Also known as GET DOWN AND BOOGIE. Are you ready?

HELL UP IN HARLEM (1973). Larry Cohen's sequel to BLACK CAESAR skimps heavily on logic, but not on action and hilarious dialogue as Fred Williamson returns to stake his claim as the "Black Godfather". Fred makes his mistake by leaving his territory to his "Big Papa", who promptly starts boozin' and whorin', and wiping out his rivals in subway hits (watch the closing doors). Soon enough Big Papa is 'dethroned', and Fred leaves his Beverly Hills estate to 'ease on into town' and take care of business (check the demented 'handmade' impalement on the beach and the 'hot dog' murder in the park). Fred finishes the job by lynching whitey, and Edwin Starr kicks in with the title tune. Wah-wah heaven.

BUZZ DIXON: Northridge CA

I saw these first on TV in Asheville, NC in the very early sixties; they had been cut apart to make mini-serials (some with chapters only two or three minutes long) to run during a two-hour block of cartoons and shorts in the morning hours.

THE ADVENTURES OF MR. WONDERBIRD [La Bergere et la Ramoneur] is

a 1952 animated French feature in color that combines Metropolis with Hans Christian Anderson and gives the screen its first giant robot almost a full decade before the Japanese unleashed GIGANTOR on TV. In the '70s the producer went back and reshot several sequences to bring the animation up to uniform quality; I hope somebody releases that version to video.

JOHNNY THE GIANT KILLER [Jeannot L'Intrepide] has been released to video (check your K-Mart bargain racks for it). Another French feature from the early '50s, it has so-so animation enlivened by some truly inspired gags.

SPACESHIP NO. 1 STARTS / RAKETENFLUG ZUM MOND is apparently special effects footage from a 1941 Bavarian sci-fi film (never completed) fleshed out with animation done in either France or Russia (hey, it's been 30 years since I last saw this, okay?). The special effects stuff is marvelous — an art deco spaceship on a tour of the solar system — while the animated story is so-so. I think Universal 16 offered this film as THE SPACE EXPLORERS back in the early seventies, but I'm not certain it was the same title I originally saw it under.

CHRIS DOHERTY: PENSHIPS PRESS.

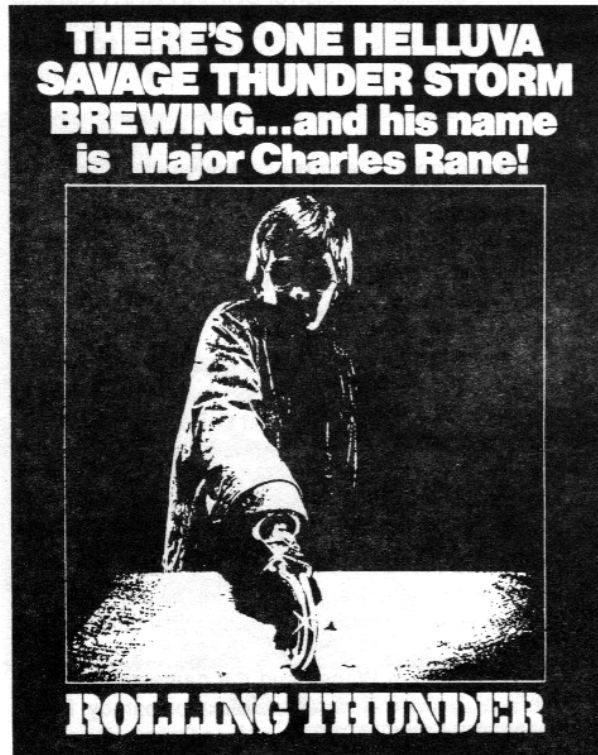
HEART BEAT (1980). This is a terrific film about Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady and the woman they both sort of loved that doesn't let the truth get in the way of a good story. Nick Nolte was born to play Neal Cassady, he captures the spacey, American, bigger than life character from "On The Road" brilliantly and there's a great scene late in the movie with an old, half-wasted Cassady driving Kesey's bus...I'll leave untangling how much of the movie's plot actually happened to someone who cares, I know some of it did and if you care about Kerouac and Kesey and old Neal you'll enjoy this one. What a great first feature this would be on a double bill with **NAKED LUNCH**.

WINTER KILLS (1979). Now that the movie JFK has made paranoia and conspiracy theories popular again, ya really ought to check out **WINTER KILLS**, the ultimate Kennedy Assassination paranoid rant. Although everything is transliterated, Dallas becomes Philadelphia, Howard Hughes becomes Casper Jr., Kennedy becomes Kegan, there's no danger of confusion. Jeff Bridges stars as a previously non-political "Kegan" who gets sucked into an investigation of his presidential brother's several year old assassination when a witness turns up who claims to know where the "Second Rifle" used in the assassination is hidden. In a wonderful moment, Bridges gets into a car with the

rifle and three police, turns his head to look out the window and a second later realizes that all three men have been shot. From that point on things only get worse for poor preterite Jeff. The film features brilliant turns by John Huston as Joe Kennedy Sr., and Anthony Perkins as the the perfect paranoid computer genius/family amanuensis.

ROLLING THUNDER (1977). William Devane is an Air Force Captain who has been a POW in Vietnam. We meet him on that plane home where he and a sergeant/fellow POW are met by their families and a big brass band. When the band stops playing, the sweet young thing who's been wearing his POW Bracelet (Remember POW bracelets?) presents him with two gifts from a local car dealer, a new Cadillac and a couple thousand silver dollars, one for each day he was held by the North Vietnamese. After that he says a few words to the television audience and goes home. Then for a while he hangs around with his wife and his son, who's never really met him before, and a big cop who's become more than friends with his wife... This part of the film succeeds brilliantly in conveying the sort of high surrealism that life in East Texas represents to someone who's been in a Hanoi jail for eight years, this guy is so alienated he's barely even present. After a while, some good ol' boys who saw the silver dollars on TV come around looking for them and end up shooting his pretty wife and his little boy and grinding his hand off in the garbage disposal. The film ends when the Captain and his sergeant pal find the GOB's in a Mexican whorehouse and kill 'em all in a scene that has always reminded me of the climax of **TAXI DRIVER**. [Editor's Note: No surprise, since Paul Schrader wrote this script too.] There's more to this film than the plot description implies, and although violent, it is by no means an action-fest. Think of it as a character study of a man without much personality left. I don't suppose this is the place to get into structural irony...

THE LAST WAVE (1977). Before he heard the siren song of Hollywood and started doing Kommercial Kute Kop Krap like **WITNESS** or Phat Phrenchie Phrolicks like **GREEN CARD**, Peter Weir made some really interesting movies in his native Australia. Chief among these is **THE LAST WAVE**, a trippy, quiet, surreal film that touches on aboriginal culture and the nature of dreams. The film follows an Australian lawyer, the white son of a missionary, who is assigned to defend three aborigines against a murder charge. It turns out the the murder is the least of the problems these three bring into his life, because something is going on in Australia. The weather is changing. I mean REALLY changing, like it's raining oil and small frogs. Our hero starts to hallucinate (or does he?), water pours out of his car radio, and a tree attacks his home after an owl stakes the place out. Somehow the three aborigines seem to be or have the key to what is going on. This film is marvelously evocative, every element from the flat affect of the main character to the use of slow motion adds to a steadily growing atmosphere of apprehension which is not so much discharged as transformed by the climactic scene. Try to see this one on the big screen, it requires that kind of space and attention to weave its spell.

**KEITH & THE FREAK SHOW MAN: A TASTE OF BILE.**

S.S. HELL CAMP. [a.k.a. **S.S. EXPERIMENTAL CAMP, BEAST IN HEAT, NAZI HOLOCAUST**]. Real sick Italian Nazi flick featuring a mongoloid that rapes women and rips out their pubes with his teeth. Also features a rather nasty scene of a S.S. officer tossing a baby into the air and shooting it.

MANIAC. For some strange reason, this gore drenched fucker repulsed even the hardest of gore fans. Great scene of a man getting his face blown off point blank with a shotgun. Great ending also.

IN A GLASS CAGE. Sort of a Spanish art film, but is disturbing and brilliant. A must see.

GUTS OF A VIRGIN. Sick Japanese film with a demon with a squirming, growling cock. Intense and sick gore 'n' rape with a scene of the demon ripping out a woman's guts with its cock.

SOUL VENGEANCE. Not nearly as good as some say, but the scene of the main character's dick growing and strangling a white man has to be seen to be believed! Look for it at Cockbuster Video.

A THOUSAND PLEASURES. Rare b/w Roberta & Michael Findlay film. Weird lezbo, S & M stuff. Two lezbos kidnap a murderer so he can impregnate them both so they can start their own lesbian colony.

SHOGUN ASSASSIN. Great blood spurting kung fu film. One of the bloodiest martial arts movies we've ever seen.

THE KILLER. Fucking great Chinese crime action film. No one gets shot less than 20 times in this! Shoot 'em point blank in the head then unload the fucking clip into their chest!



DEATHLINE a.k.a. RAW MEAT (1972). This fine British chiller was barely released in The States—usually stuffed on the bottom half of double bills with its more lurid title in tow. It's too bad. Because though the premise does indeed concern cannibalism, director Gary Sherman never allows his tale to sink to the level of a simple gut-muncher. It's more a mood-soaked mystery revolving around disappearances in the London Subway System, with a police investigation taking center stage. Stranger still, we even get the rare opportunity of seeing Donald Pleasance ACT (since after HALLOWEEN, he seemed to become a scenery-chewer for hire), and he's great as a cynical, sharp-tongued Inspector. The explanation for the missing persons lies in the fact that in 1892, when the tube system was first being built, a cave-in sealed up a pocket of workers. It seems they've survived in the caverns under London ever since, and after a few generations of in-breeding, their civilized edge is getting a tad ragged. So when they run out food, the only logical option is to EAT the subway patrons. The real surprise comes when we encounter these "creatures". Because instead of the horrible monsters we've come to expect from watching too much Late Show dreck, we discover the culprit is just one pathetic, animalistic simpleton with a hairstyle by the House of Rasputin. Sure, the guy kidnaps people off the platforms and keeps 'em alive (and fresh) for his next meal, but oddly enough, the film makes him a sad, compassionate figure. His wife has just passed away, he's the last of his lot, all he's doing is trying to survive, and it's a fascinating slant, having the primitive killer more inherently sympathetic than all the rest of the cast (with Hugh Armstrong giving his feral all, buried under 20lbs of hair). And since the NYC subways drive me bonkers after only a hour, I can imagine what an entire lifetime in one would do! The sequences in the tunnels are particularly chilling (especially the catacombs of picked-clean bones), but the above-ground dramatics are a little too standard, with a young couple dragged into the storyline (one of which is an annoying New Yorker). And though Chris Lee is listed large in the credits, he's only on board for one long scene...This is a wonderful, mood-drenched chiller that doesn't take any of the easy, expected routes. And since it never resorts to cheap shocks, that's probably why it was ignored by peabrained horrorfans. It's their loss. —Steve Puchalski

GRINGO a.k.a. STORY OF A JUNKIE (1985). Those guys at Troma must have a screw loose. I have nothing against them spewing out wonderful trash like CHOPPER CHICKS IN ZOMBIETOWN or the TOXIC AVENGER trilogy, but when a truly marvelous film like GRINGO falls into their laps, they don't know what the hell to do with it. In some instances, the movie manages to sneak out to the public (like Buddy Giovinazzo's shattering COMBAT SHOCK—the true JACOB'S LADDER—which was butchered by Troma for its limited theatrical release, yet restored for video), but GRINGO played the 42nd Street scene for one whopping week and has never been sighted (legally) since. (The same lousy fate awaited the no-budget Troma pick-up SCREAMPLAY, starring George Kuchar.) Well, this movie deserved better, and it could've played East Village midnight shows for months (since it was filmed on those streets)...Directed by Lech Kowalski (best known for the punk doc D.O.A., featuring Sid on the nod), it's a portrait of long time Village resident and heroin addict John Spacely. John is a personable character, open to inspection and willing to let the camera follow him anywhere. And Kowalski counters by simply shadowing the eye-patched Spacely through his daily routine, overlaying it all with Spacely's own commentary, and (thank god) offering NO cheap, easy moralizing in order to pander to self-righteous, do-gooder swine. Equipped with his skateboard, Spacely scores a bag, shoots up on camera, kills a little time, demonstrates his balanced diet of pizza and Ballantine Ale (with a straw, of course), runs into junkie friends and felons, and roams about the drug-etched niches of the Alphabet Heartland—Avenue D and 12th Street (only three blocks from my own pad! How convenient!). Kowalski even gets his camera inside a junk

"HARROWING"
Village Voice, NY TIMES

"IMPRESSIVE"
Archives, NY POST

"POWERFUL"
Radio, NY ABC TV

LLOYD KAUFMAN
AND MICHAEL MERZ PRESENT
A TROMA TEAM RELEASE

**STORY
OF A
JUNKIE**

A LECH KOWALSKI FILM
STARRING JOHN SPACELY
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shop, complete with homeys sittin' in their rathole apartment, baggin' heroin...Spacely is a fascinating tourguide into this hell. Not the cool, punk poseur world of drugs, but the one of poverty and despair, with dope providing fast cash and an escape from the urban cesspool. We're treated to a long, sad monologue from an addict shooting up and mellowing out; sudden violence when streetside tempers flare over cash; not to mention the joy of early morning vomiting. And though the movie flawlessly captures the realism of the scene, that's also an inherent weakness, because since junkies aren't exactly the most motivated individuals, watching them for 90 full minutes can get pretty boring at times. But Spacely's presense is enough to hold it (loosely) together, and GRINGO contains more raw, heartwrenching truth than any Tinseltown production could ever tackle (such as Spacely's story of how he turned to heroin after his girlfriend's miscarriage and death)...This is a great document which, though filled with heavy moments, is never weighted down by them. And the lyrical finale, with Spacely skateboarding around Manhattan to the tune "Since I Don't Have You", is a magnificent capper to an underseen gem. —Steve Puchalski

IN YOUR FACE a.k.a. ABAR—THE FIRST BLACK SUPERMAN (1977). I love Xenon Video! They've distributed some fine black films, such as the Gordon Parks Sr. documentary *VISIONS*, but they don't just deal with classy A-titles. Their catalog is ripe with action pix like *THREE THE HARD WAY* and wild-assed independent sleaze like *THIS!* Though the video box calls this thing *IN YOUR FACE*, that title is nowhere to be found on the film itself (I love truth in advertising!). Instead, it's *ABAR*—without question the weirdest thing since *SOUL VENGEANCE* (remember the ten-foot-long killer penis?!). Director Frank Packard might not know jack about making a slick, coherent movie (hell, any film school grad could do that), but he sure knows how to make a freaky one...It begins when a black family named The Kinkades moves into the all-white suburban SoCal neighborhood of Meadow Park. Even though the husband (J. Walter Smith) is a rich, respected, articulate Doctor, the bigoted locals begin picketing City Hall, Nazi armbands come into vogue, and the radio station even interrupts its regular programming in order to warn the population! All this in the first FIVE minutes! The last straw is when racists toss a coffin on the Kinkade's front lawn, so to help even the sides, in comes a gang of black, militant, ultra-funky motorcyclists, led by the self-appointed crusader for justice, Abar (Tobar Mayo)! And Abar promptly moves in with the family as their personal bodyguard, and kicks some serious honky ass. All this—racists, revenge and sledgehammer socio-political rhetoric—would be enough for any blaxploitation flick. But this isn't just any movie, you see! So be sure to toss back a few beers before the severe twistedness erupts, when we learn that the Doc's secret medical research involves a serum that can make the subject indestructible (hence his bullet-proofed rabbits!). Of course, Abar takes the drug and turns into a superhuman juggernaut! First, a dry-ice-bathed vision of Jesus invests him with divine powers of retribution, after which Abar sits catatonically atop the Watts Towers and uses his new psychic powers to turn an Oreo politician's spaghetti dinner into a plateful of worms. (Are you still following me?) Eventually Abar brings the Plagues of God down on the neighborhood, including infestations of rats, snakes, storms, et cetera. **THIS IS CRAZY SHIT!** Completely inept, dismally acted, but so whacked, I couldn't help but love it! —Steve Puchalski

RENALDO & CLARA



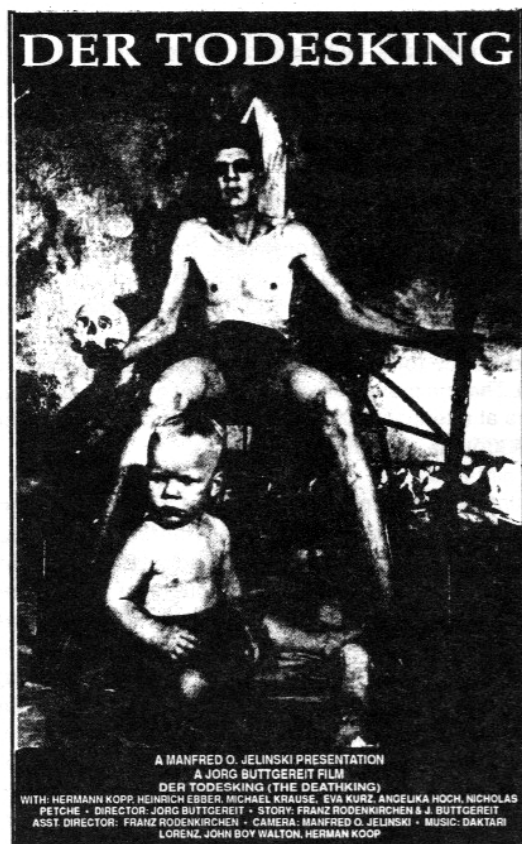
RENALDO AND CLARA (1977). Hoooboy! It's time for a long, murky dive in Pretentiousville, as we tackle Bob Dylan's now-legendary cinematic miasma. Clocking in at nearly four hours (though some prints were later trimmed by Zimmy to a little over two hours), *R&C* is a rambling, near-incoherent document of Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue. And it comes across as one monstrous home movie—but since it's Bob's home movie, it's definitely worth a look. Never one to take a straight-forward route, writer/director Dylan clouds the entire film in riddles, while meshing concert footage and backstage rambling with political rhetoric, pseudo-documentary filler, and utterly bewildering fictional sequences. Then all this footage seems to have been edited together with a Weed Eater, with sequences abruptly cutting off, others beginning in the middle, and earlier ones resuming at any random moment...But the first thing I should make clear is the fact that this is NOT a bad movie, as most vapid U.S. critics unjustly labelled it—simply a dazed and confused one. And though frustratingly enigmatic, there are so many choice bits laced throughout, it still keeps your attention (IF you're a Dylan fan, that is. If not, you'll want to avoid this film like you would a Republican fundraiser). And it's a hell of a lot better than that wretched *HEARTS OF FIRE* flick Dylan starred in a couple years back with Fiona... You immediately realize you're in the Land of the Weird when the film opens with Dylan on stage, singing "When I Paint My Masterpiece" while wearing a clear plastic Halloween mask. And we're in turn treated to some great stories of Dylan's early career and the Greenwich Village music scene; rants by Bible-thumping dimwits; roadies at work setting up the stage; Indian Rights activists; a poetry reading by Allen Ginsberg; fast talking record execs; footage on Rubin "Hurricane" Carter's trumped up murder rap; and even moments of bizarre rural melodrama (probably due to Sam Shepherd's contribution to the script) featuring a clueless cameo by Harry Dean Stanton. But at least half of the running time is devoted to the wild, handheld concert

footage from the Revue, featuring Bob in bizarre white face paint and stupendous live versions of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall", "Isis", "Tangled Up in Blue", "Knockin' On Heaven's Door", and many, many more... The one thing that occurred to me while viewing this monstrous mess of a movie, is that if ANY film could represent the mechanisms of Bob's mind, this is it. Because it seems that whatever half-baked idea popped into his head, he tossed it onto the screen. Often it feels like one big cosmic joke—in most scenes Dylan is playing himself, in one scene Ronnie Hawkins claims to be Dylan, and toward the end Dylan is supposed to be Renaldo (Confused? Join the club.), with Sara Dylan playing Clara during a sloppy soap opera in which Sara and Joan Baez argue over Bob's affections... Featuring performances by Ronee Blakely and Roger McGuinn, this epic is filled with amazing music, pocked with virtually incomprehensible filler, and is without a doubt a one of a kind chunk of cinema. A tapestry of Dylan's life, with a few moth-eaten holes in it. —Steve Puchalski

A BRITISH PICTURE (1989). This hour-long film is a superb companion piece to Ken Russell's autobiography of the same name (his U.S. publisher changed the title to *ALTERED STATES*). Directed by Ken and produced for The South Bank Show (on a microscopic budget), Russell employs his entire family to tell this zany version of his own life—that of a self-proclaimed *Enfant Terrible*. The entire film plays like a glorified home movie, and since it's Ken Russell's glorified home movie, it never takes itself serious for one moment. So don't expect any bland suck-up interviews with friends, accomplices and parasites. Instead, Ken has his young son star as himself—not just as a child, but also as an adult—making Russell out to be a true "enfant", while sporting a rainbow afro wig for most of the tale. From watching films such as *METROPOLIS* as a child and his Catholic indoctrination, to directing shows for the British Air Force and his beginnings as a film director, Russell whimsically integrates his favorite songs, film clips, backyard locations, and anecdotes into an innovative stew. With ol' Ken himself portraying all the authority figures in his life (military officials, inane interviewers, et cetera), while sporting hilariously hokey theatrical

mustaches, noses, and beards. In addition, only the most obscure clips from his least know work are shown (possibly cuz he couldn't afford the rights to his studio projects), making it a must see for Russellophiles. There are fleeting clips from MAHLER, SAVAGE MESSIAH, CLOUDS OF GLORY, early shorts, composer bios for Brit TV (from Bartok to DeBussy), and even a couple lame music videos (Cliff Richard's inane "She's So Beautiful" and an absolutely absurd one featuring Ken's singing LAWYER!). All this should be no surprise for his hardcore fans, who'd expect nothing less than irreverence from the guy, even when looking up his own existence. And the best visual gags are at his own expense—such as spelling out 'FART' in alphabet soup, then removing the 'F' to make 'ART'; or his "shelf of awards", which is a collection of Mickey Mouse dolls. The pic concludes with Ken readying his dream project of THE RAINBOW, followed by a phone call from a producer, offering him the deal to make the bio-pic we're watching at that very moment. Wow! Only Ken could get away with this kinda shit! Give the guy a camera, let him dig through some old film vaults, call in the wife and kids, and the result is unforgettable! —Steve Puchalski

MARYJANE (1968). You don't find films like this anymore! Kicking off with a high-speed bumper-cam shot, leading to a gory hit-and-run, this American-International schlockfest about the evils of drug abuse is a cool laff-riot! Packed with sledgehammer social commentary and ham-handedly directed by drive-in vet Maury Dexter (HELL'S BELLES, THE MINI-SKIRT MOB). Unfortunately, I was hoping for a hippie happening like PSYCH-OUT, but instead it comes off more like a suburban soap opera, with malevolent marijuana turning good kids bad. And it's set in a fairytale-land where all the teens are clean cut, all the issues are cut and dry, and (in the only honest observation) all the judges, cops and authority figures are hardline swine. In other words, all AIP did was to recycle all the clunky cliches from their '50s Troubled Teen pics, and then sprinkle 'em with grass to make it relevant. Oh well, even though it misses greatness by a mile, it's still goofy fun...Set at an average-American high school, we learn that the star football players are heavily into the weed, along with Patty McCormack (THE BAD SEED) as blonde cupcake Susan, and Michael Margotta (DRIVE, HE SAID) as sensitive artist-type Jerry (you can tell he's "sensitive", because he paints bad abstracts in art class and does a spineless James Dean impression). Meanwhile, the community bigwigs wring their hands and inaccurately explain the facts behind "maryjane". How after smoking it, kids "act weird" (no, really?) and how "it spreads like cancer", with one flatfoot spewing the hoary old warning that it leads directly to heroin. But liberal-minded football coach/art teacher Fabian tries to tune in with his turned on students (when he isn't hitting on hot new history teacher Diane McBain). And you know the guy's gotta be cool because he's the only adult in sight wearing jeans. Fabian lets loose with his side of the issue ("marijuana does less damage than cigarettes or alcohol") and even admits to trying it (once), which doesn't sit well with his superiors, who instantly label him a Dope-Addict Teacher. He's even tossed into jail on a false charge, where he encounters beatniked Dick Gautier (who co-wrote this slop, along with that Hollywood square, Peter Marshall) and the dooper in the next cot hangs himself in the middle of the night. All the while, the teens are toking up, and acting increasingly stupid and irresponsible (though considering most of 'em were jocks to begin with, they couldn't really get much stupider). Though the pace lags in the middle, the ending is supercharged melodrama, with Fabian discovering that The Good Humor Man has been selling "pints" of Acapulco Gold behind the school bleachers, Ms. McBain is hooked on heroin, and Jerry has blown his mind on hash! Solid idiocy which is good for plenty of unintentional guffaws, but (unfortunately) never has the guts to actually condone marijuana use...Blink and you'll miss "Terri" Garr as one of the stoner babes.—Steve Puchalski



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DER TODESKING a.k.a. THE DEATH KING (1989) and NEKROMANTIC 2 (1991). In the previous issue of SHOCK, I raved about director Jorg Buttgerreit's NEKROMANTIC. Well, since then, the guy certainly hasn't been sitting around, lazily watching roadkills pile up. He's got two new features which are just now running amok through VCR's across North America. And after taking in both of these twisted efforts, I can see Jorg hasn't lost his unsavory touch. Or caved in to any form of self-censorship (thank goodness)...DER TODESKING, Jorg's second feature, consists of seven vignettes, loosely basted together. And all share the same happy-go-lucky theme: Death! This unrelenting ode to the darkest edge of the human condition begins with a guy's ritualistic suicide (shaving, making sure the dishes are done, and then swallowing a shitload of pills in the bath), but just before his demise, he mails out a pile of chain letters. And the rest of the film follows each recipient, as they're involved in a gruesome murder, death, or mutilation. Unfortunately, like any film comprised of individual stories, some fall flat, others might have a fascinating moment or two, and (if you're lucky) a few are genuinely successful. Though there are a few brilliantly sick moments (my favorite is when a mass murderer hooks a movie camera onto their shoulder before going on a rampage, so the audience gets a Killer-Cam View), but overall, the film is more ingenious than triumphant. As expected, the pic is packed with powerful images sure to turn the stomach of almost any sane viewer (like the repeated images of a decomposing corpse), and it's an unarguably grim attempt to uncover the pain that IS life. But it lacks the fetishistic exhilaration that permeated his first feature, and without that charge of sexual tension, the narrative simply comes off depressing and morose, from beginning to end. All in all, not exactly Frank Capra, if you couldn't guess...And for NEKROMANTIC 2, Jorg had even a harder task at hand, in trying to live up to the disturbing, unrelenting power of the original. Jorg is still tackling the links

between death and sexuality, but the effect is less personal this time around, despite its technical advances. The death-obsessed lovers of the first (Daktari Lorenz and the bedazzling Beatrice M., who were both grounded in working-class reality) are gone, replaced with Monika M. and Mark Reedek. Monika is a cute young blond who blithely spends her afternoons digging up fresh graves (in her heels, no less), exhuming the dead, and lugging the decomposing remains back to her pad (How does she get 'em home without anyone noticing? Public transportation?) for an evening of necrophilia. Our male lead, Mark, represents more traditional sexual tastes (in other words, he's sort of

a boring dork), and the two begin to date each other. Unfortunately, sex with a living guy just doesn't turn Monika on, and her mind's always wandering back to the rancid, greenish, dead guy she's got stashed away—a fact that's difficult to explain to her new, straight-arrow boyfriend. An additional drawback to corpse-fucking is getting used to the fact that your lover doesn't have a very long shelf life, and after a while she has to slice him up with a handsaw and dispose of the remains (of course, Monika saves the penis in her fridge, covered in Saran Wrap). Buttgerit continues to break boundaries of good taste and on-screen depravity, and the film is a shattering experience for anyone unprepared. But the movie misses the depth of passion that the first maintained, and it doesn't go any further in exploring the territory. Unlike the first, we watch these folks, but never feel anything for them or understand their obsessions. Plus the characters just aren't as interesting. Obviously, Jorg had a much larger budget this time around. His props are getting exceedingly realistic, and I bet the guy has a lifetime subscription to Autopsy Monthly Magazine. The additional cash also gave him a chance to tinker with the music and sound design, and go off onto some strange tangents—like a little music-video dream sequence in the middle. It also allowed him to break out of the claustrophobic

surroundings of the first and give the film a glossier look (which unfortunately only diminishes the tale's gritty immediacy). Still, if you can ignore comparisons with the first, NEKROMANTIK 2 is a shocking, deviantly amusing achievement, which works best on a simple, bloodthirsty, gross-out level. Which still makes it better than most of the mindless fare polluting VCR's nowadays. —Steve Puchalski



MOTOR PSYCHO (1965). At long last, Russ Meyer, the prince of pneumatic poutang, has unearthed his motorcycle classic—which even predated trend-setters such as THE WILD ANGELS with its cast of leather-swaddled chopper cretins. Though not up to the high standards of BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS or MUDHONEY, this comes off more like a male-dominated precursor to FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL! in terms of style and attitude... This sleazy little romp begins when a trio of motorcyclists (named Brahmin, Dante and Slick) are travelling 'cross the desert and happen to run across a buxom bombshell sunning herself in a teeny bikini. After trying to fondle the merchandise, her hubble appears and (ever so wisely) starts a brawl with the three greasers. Soon, the guy's dogfood and the gal is date bait. But the trio never anticipates encountering someone like Alex Rocco, as a he-man macho cowboy veterinarian. And one day, while he's off tending to a neighbor's sick horse (of course, since this is a Russ Meyer film, the neighbor is an extremely top-heavy nympho), his girlfriend is accosted by the sewer studs—who put on go-go music, drink her beer, use her phone for long distance calls, and (oh yeah, almost forgot) molest her. From then on, pissed-off Rocco is out for revenge and on their scurvy, victim-laden trail. It culminates in the middle of Nowhere USA, with all the high-octane hysterics we've come to expect (and love) from Meyer. The head of the bikers begins having Nam flashbacks (!), Rocco is in a fever dream from being bitten on the leg by a rattler, Meyer-veteran Haji makes an appearance and gets to suck out the snake poison, and Russ just keeps pouring on the overwrought melodrama. Yeah! As usual, the b&w photography is superb, the characters are virtual cartoons (high testosterone males & loose women in tight dresses), and the pace never falters. Russ always knew how to keep his audience's attention from

wandering, and he crams this flick's 74 minutes with adrenilized editing, wild redneck dialogue (one shitheel's comment on a rape victim: "Nothin' happened to her that a woman ain't equipped for."), and a nihilistic edge to it all. Though there's no nudity (sort of a disappointment for this type of swill), Russ' choice of actresses will undoubtedly keep male moviegoers at attention, as they stretch their costumes to the very limits of your imagination... Russ rarely disappoints, and this is a clear success all around. —Steve Puchalski

BETTY PAGE: SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT (1990). No, it's not the real thing, but an amazing recreation! This independent featurette is a cute, 18 minute homage to underground pin-up queen, Betty Page, who's finally being recognized as one of the first (and without a doubt, most stylish) bondage & black leather cheesecake models. The film is played as a mock documentary, looking back at Betty's career, seeing what she's up to nowadays, and interviewing her most ardent fans. From Irving Klaw's actual photo studio, through her rise to fame and fetishdom, with Abbey Lavine ably portraying Betty and winning us over with her flirtatious smile and narration. No actual Page footage is ever used, but director Joe Westmoreland effectively recreates the grainy b&w films of Betty shimmying for the camera. For the fictional episodes, we follow Betty out shopping, dressed only in black lingerie; vacuuming her rug in garters and see-thru negligee; and even partaking in the psychedelia of the late '60s. But the strangest bits are from the Betty fanatics, including people who secretly dress up like Page in the privacy of their home (including a guy), plus a savage impersonation of Cher (also played by a guy). Primarily, it's Ms. Lavine's performance as Betty that holds the film together, not only looking the part, but coming across as both extremely sweet and sexy (not to mention spending most of the film in her undies, guys). And though she might miss the sultry, mysterious side that made Page such a timeless icon, to Abbey's credit, I don't think anyone could've done a more convincing job... Admittedly, it's lightweight fare, but it was also made with a true love for Betty and her legacy. And you can't ask for more than that. —Steve Puchalski

WOMEN'S PRISON CELL 701: THE SCORPION (1977). Since I was running out of good English language Women in Prison films, I decided to delve into this Japanese lensed one, despite the fact it had no subtitles. But I figured that if it's like any good Babes-Behind-Bars movie, you really don't need 'em. How right I was! Without a doubt, this is the best Slammer Sluts movie to NEVER make it to U.S. shores! The credit sequence alone gives us a barrage of quick scenes-to-come: Everything from beatings, strippings, and loads of trippy ultra-violence. Then it's followed by two pretty escapees running from attack dogs (they beat one canine to death with a log!) while one of them

hemorrhages. It's stunningly brutal stuff, and only five minutes into it, I wanted more, more, MORE!! The video was even letterboxed, so not one iota of the sadism gets cropped off. Now, THAT'S considerate!...On the surface, the film is essentially the T&A we've come to know and love (shower scenes, oogling guards, and physical abuse), but it's also crafted and shot like high art. Then suddenly in the midst of all the torment and ridicule, the filmmakers will weave in a truly touching moment (such as a prisoner's stylized memory of how she got there) that makes you sit up and realize, "these people actually know what they're doing!" And while U.S. entries in the genre revel in misogynistic plot twists (such as rape), those aspects are avoided in favor of more even-gendered abuse and sudden bursts of riotously sick violence. For example, a guard is stabbed in the eye with a chunk of broken glass, but he's so pissed off he ends up strangling the perpetrator, and then continues to bark out orders with that huge shard still hanging out of his eye socket!! In fact, the movie is so sensationally over-the-top that it comes off like the BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS of Women in Prison flicks, with the cinematographer and set designer keeping disorientation at the max with their revolving sets, jaw-dropping camera angles, and constant, wild visuals...Eventually, our heroine goes through a torrent of physical and mental torture (such as spending the entire night digging a huge hole in the prison courtyard), before all the ladies stage a full-scale takeover of the place, all of them frantically running about like they were at a Tokyo KMart Blue Light Sale. There's even an epilogue which will have you cheering at it high Vengeance Quotient. If you haven't gotten the point yet, this is a stunning work (and it'd probably be even better if I could understand Japanese). I'm gonna keep searching for other films from director Ito Toshiya, because he's a maestro of cinematic mayhem. Four stars! —Steve Puchalski

SHANKS (1974). This barely distributed film was William Castle's last excursion into directing. Self-labeled a "grim fairy tale", it stars mime bigshot Marcel Marceau as a mad puppeteer. But don't go into it expecting any of Castle's famed gimmicks like *Emergo*, for this is simply a creepy (or should that be crappy?) mess. So juvenile and crudely produced that it feels like a European After School Special instead of the twisted fable Castle was hoping for. And so filled with unintentional hilarity that it's simply embarrassing after a while...Marcel, who can

barely act in the first place, is saddled with a dual role. First, as the title character Malcolm Shanks, a deaf and dumb puppeteer (with tragically flaired pants) who's living in a hovel with his drunken, shrewish family and their outrageous foreign accents (if bad accents were a crime, the entire supporting cast would be in Attica). But one day Malcolm is hired by a rich old recluse (also poorly played by Marcel, under six pounds of cheap latex). You see, the old man is experimenting with reanimating the dead by stuffing electrodes into them, and he needs a "puppeteer" as talented as Shanks to make them walk about. After rehearsing on chickens, they move onto humans, which initiates some cheap slapstick at the expense of the dead. It's admittedly bizarre to watch Shanks collect his deceased human puppets (though after a while I began to wonder why they never started to stink), and even more so when the corpses begin dancing and accidentally cutting off their own fingers at a li'l girl's birthday party. But for every offbeat moment, you get long boring scenes of Marcel pining for the jailbait girl of his dreams. Zzzzzz. And just when you THOUGHT it had hit its height of absurdity, a motorcycle gang suddenly roars onto the scene (with Don Calfa and Helena Kallicoates as a couple of the motorcycle sickos), as if they're escaped from some other movie! And suddenly Marceau turns into the most dubious action hero of all time! Hell, Mister Rogers has more macho charisma!...Castle takes a genuinely twisted concept and executes it with all the finesse of a Carol Burnett Show rerun. Sure, it's weird as hell, but it's also stunningly inept most of the time. You can tell Castle was hoping to create a magical fable (similar to what Tim Burton accomplished with *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*), but arrived only with a cosmic misjudgement, from its annoyingly cutesy credits/segues, to its interminably upbeat finale. I just kept shaking my head in utter disbelief, and the movie clocked a near record number of walk-outs at the Film Forum theatre...I often wondered why this movie hadn't been shown in over a decade. After grimacing through it, I now fully understand. —Steve Puchalski

DELICIOUSLY GROTESQUE



A new concept in the macabre in which the Good come out of the grave and the Evil are sent to fill the vacancy.

Paramount Pictures presents
a William Castle production
marcel marceau
shanks

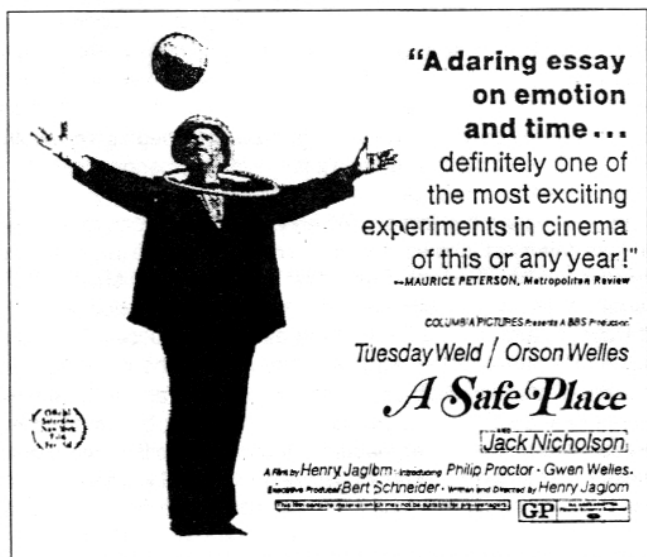
DOCTOR OF DOOM (1962). Mexican movies are the coolest! When you've got insomnia and the only thing on TV are those low-IQ'ed "info-tainment" shows, a Mexican monster movie (plus several beers) will keep you smiling (not to mention belching) 'til dawn. And along with the classic *THE BRAINIAC*, this is the best! A true south-of-the-border baloney-fest, featuring a mad doctor (aptly nicknamed by the press "The Mad Doctor") and his wacky (and not altogether successful) brain experiments. His only good luck has been in transplanting a gorilla's brain into the body of a human (hasn't the NFL been doing that for years?). Meanwhile, his attempts at moving brains from female to female have been flops, so he has to keep kidnapping young ladies for his subjects. Hmmm, maybe this time he'll abduct a professional female wrestler, because what Mexican B-movie would be complete without a wrestling subplot? And before you know it, we've got loads of women in tights smacking the bejesus out of each other. Our heroines include the curvaceous champ, the lovely Gloria Venus, and her tag-team partner, the pretty North American newcomer The Golden Rubi—and when they go after the Deranged Doc, you get more cheapjack entertainment than most livers can stand! The entire film is so damned ridiculous that you'll be laughing non-stop, and it's got the logic-be-damned momentum of an old Saturday matinee serial...When the two lovely leads aren't

entertaining us in the ring (their opponents are usually stocky, short, 40 year olds, with figures like Danny DeVito on estrogen; while Gloria and Rubi are statuesque, trim and have perfectly permed hair), the Doc is roaming about with a pillowcase over his head and getting acid spattered in his face. Or Gomar, the man/ape, is breaking out of his (obviously cardboard) cage. By the end, the Doc creates a super-wrestless named Vendetta, who Gloria & Rubi have to fight in the Big Finale! If you couldn't already tell from that hodgepodge of a plot, the action and stupidity never ceases from director Rene Cardona (not to be confused with his son, Rene Jr., who spewed "non-fiction" swill like *SURVIVE!* and *AMIN, THE RISE AND FALL*). Starring Elizabeth Campbell and Lorena Vasquez, this is top notch, lowbrow fun! —Steve Puchalski

SINTHIA, THE DEVIL'S DOLL (1968). Ray Dennis Steckler has already found a niche in my curdled consciousness with his early '60s hits, *THE THRILL KILLERS*, *RAT PHINK A BOO BOO* and *INCREDIBLY STRANGE CREATURES*... Truly, they're three of the most entertaining zero-budget masterworks of that drive-in era. Hilariously fractured narration, striking photography, and numbing performances (including Huntz Hall-lookalike Cash Flagg), all make for very special movies for very drunk audiences. But if you thought any of those three were difficult to follow, just wait until *SINTHIA*! In fact it was originally so unfathomable, the producers took the film out of Steckler's hands and added new footage that (vaguely) explains what the hell is going on. Steckler was so justifiably pissed off by the boneheaded compromising of his vision that he took his name off the flick and used the pseudonym Sven Christian. Even after the tinkering, the film is still mondo bizarre. And the hallucinogenic pre-credit prologue alone will set your sensibilities reeling, in which a daughter plays voyeur on her parents, murders 'em with a kitchen knife, and sets the house on fire, while we're greeted to dialogue so outstandingly pretentious it's almost European ("A red swirling sea of blood is where I was condemned to live," as colors swirl under the title credit). It's great!...First time (and possibly last time) actress Shula Roan stars as Cynthia, the lead character. And since as an adult she's still plagued by nightmares, a helpful psychiatrist attempts to probe her psyche for childhood traumas and obsessions. So much for the coherent portion—because the rest of the film is an eye-popping excursion into cheapjack symbolism. Everything, everyone, is bathed in colored lights, nude extras chant "we love Lucifer", and Steckler pulls out every trick in the *Stoned Cinematographers' Guide to Trip Sequences*. Hell, for a moment I thought I'd stumbled into an underground art film—sorta Dante's *Inferno* as adapted by Kenneth Anger. Underlying all her fears is the fact Cynthia might love her father a tad too much, because during her hellish trip every man within spitting distance turns into her Pop, Cynthia keeps screaming out "Daddy! Please hold me!", and at one point she even marries her own dad (just before some naked broad steals him away). She also gets to meet Satan and his sadistic minions during her demented dive into Stream of Conscious Cinema. For a while Cynthia falls under the spell of an acne-scarred artist named Lenny, and by the end, she learns to enjoy her own body (i.e. a chaste masturbation scene) and "drives the devil from her soul"...True, the entire plot could've easily fit into a one-reeler (you can go out for a six pack, return, and not miss a damned thing except for a few writhing extras), but that's not the point. Because the camera whirls like a dervish; the editor must've been dosed; most of the dialogue is shot with a single actor staring straight into lenses, as colored lights flicker over their face; and if you dubbed the actors into Italian and slapped Fellini's name on it, dimwitted critics would've hailed it as a crude, feminist masterwork. Ms. Roan spends most of the film in a state of undressed panic, screaming her dialogue, and writer Herb Robbins (star of the classic *THE WORM EATERS*) also steps in front of the camera as Lucifer. Without question (and despite the re-editing), this is another screwball winner from Steckler. —Steve Puchalski

A SAFE PLACE (1971) and THE KING OF MARVIN GARDENS (1972). I have a fondness for the films produced by BBS during the late '60s/early '70s. All of their movies had two things in common—they gave young directors a chance, and each had an idiosyncratic edge that still shines through today, over two decades later. Plus it doesn't hurt that their first two endeavors were *HEAD* and *EASY RIDER*, two of my favorite films of all time. Those were followed by successes like *THE LAST PICTURE SHOW* and *FIVE EASY PIECES*. But not all of their projects are that well remembered, as in the case of these two flicks, which were complete financial and critical duds at the time, but share the same themes as BBS's earlier work...First off is *A SAFE PLACE*, which gave Henry Jaglom his first directing job. If you're familiar with Jaglom's recent features, you know he's not exactly one of America's most accessible auteurs. Most of his films have consisted of extremely autobiographical, often annoyingly whiny, meditations on his own marriage, divorce, and loneliness. Try to imagine a Woody Allen movie without the intellectual humor, the snappy direction, or the charismatic personality, and you have a Jaglom flick. Nevertheless, I admire him for turning his back on the pinheaded studios, and depending on my mood, I can sometimes even enjoy his work (though I hate to admit

it afterward). Well, *A SAFE PLACE* is one of his most difficult concoctions (which says a lot). A solid early '70s indulgence fest, and the kind of film that just doesn't seem to get made in America today. The dialogue rambles along as if it were improvised, characters appear and disappear for no apparent reason, the interiors look like they might be Jaglom's own apartment, and the whole cast is comprised of pals he usually parties with. Tuesday Weld (always drop dead gorgeous) stars as a tripped-out, organically dippy young lady who's unable to deal with current day problems and retreats into her past. In the present, her relationship with square boyfriend Phil Procter is cracking, old bedmate Jack Nicholson pops up on the scene, and Tuesday begins flashbacking to an encounter with Orson Welles, as a fat, flush-faced magician she met at the zoo. All the while, she's sporting atrocious hippie threads, and spouting such pretentious, dated nonsense that it makes Jaglom's later films look virtually commercial in comparison. I realize all this was supposed to be deep and introspective, but instead it comes off as stultifying self-examination, which only jumps to life due to the superb cast. And any honest heartache and pain gets buried under a ton of self-consciousness and a structure so oblique it distances the viewer from any true emotion (not to mention coherency). Tuesday is wonderful, with eyes that convey more than all her dialogue combined, as a woman so flaked out she gets



sexually aroused by phone numbers. Nicholson has a really difficult role ("Hello, Jack? It's Jaglom. You wanna be in my movie? Most of your scenes will take place in bed with Tuesday Weld." "Sure. I think I can handle that."), and he's the catalyst for a wonderfully deranged scene in which Jack is trying to seduce Tuesday while her boyfriend is roaming about the apartment. It's the highlight of the entire movie, provoking loads of nervous laughter. And Orson Welles' contribution is almost baffling. It looks as if Jaglom simply filmed him and Weld roaming around Central Park one afternoon, then chopped it into bite-sized segments and weaved it into the storyline. Most of Welles' role consists of him trying to make animals vanish by saying "disappear" in ugly close-up (but instead, the only thing he's able to make disappear are the paying customers). And are you wondering if it's action-packed? Perhaps not! Yet despite all its glaring faults, I love this type of mess. Because even if the result is an introspective muddle, at least we get honest moments of truth and despair, with actors going out on a limb for a change

(unlike present-day studio drivel, when a 'daring' role is Dustin Hoffman wearing a fop wig and playing Captain Hook)...On the other hand, **KING OF MARVIN GARDENS** is simply a wonderful movie that slipped through the cracks, and it's one of Bob Rafelson's best. Like **A SAFE PLACE**, the story centers around people who can not cope with their lives and try to escape. But while in the first film, Tuesday embraced a dreamworld of her past, here the leads avoid reality through a dreamworld of half-baked financial schemes. In both, their routes lead to disaster...Once again, the cast is the focal point, with Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern and Ellen Burstyn doing some of their most daring work to date. It also benefits from Laszlo Kovac's evocative cinematography, which captures the decayed boardwalk, rocky surf and grey skies of Atlantic City at wintertime. Plus, Rafelson kicks it off with a mesmerizing intro, in which Nicholson has a full five minute monologue, staring straight into the camera. Jack stars as the meeker, bespectacled younger brother of Dern, who plays an opportunistic, none-to-legit conman (Note: On the Monopoly board, Marvin Gardens is the space just before 'Go To Jail'). Dern is mixed up with the mob, Jack is there to keep him out of any trouble, and together with Burstyn as Dern's girlfriend, all of them are staying at a once-palatial hotel creepy enough to be a precursor to **THE SHINING**'s Overlook. Meanwhile, Dern has yet another half-baked plan to buy up an island near Hawaii and convert it into a casino. The film is primarily a character study of lost people, living in fantasies which are on the verge of collapse. And the cast wades into these choice roles. Dern is brilliant as the consummate bullshit artist, and along with **SMILE**, it's his most fully-realized performance. Burstyn is heart-breaking as an aging beauty queen who's heading toward a complete nervous breakdown. And Jack reigns in his usual high-pressure personality to play an observer to the dramatic chaos—a voice of reason who's already given up on his dreams. It's quite a step up for Nicholson and Dern, who only five years earlier had been teamed up in cycle-swill like **THE REBEL ROUSERS**. Scripter Jacob Brackman give each of them wonderful moments in which to flex their acting skills, and a highlight is their make-believe version of the Miss America Pageant, set in a huge, empty stadium. Kovac's desolate landscapes and often-unreal compositions also help zero in on their isolation, and the result is a cynical, pitch black study of the toll paid for clinging too closely to dreams. A rough-cut gem of powerful, emotion confrontations. Laced in comic idiocy which makes you want to laugh (if it weren't so damned painful), and a perfect example of just how far the BBS philosophy of filmmaking could take us. —Steve Puchalski



BEGOTTEN (1991). In **BEGOTTEN** director E. Elias Merhige dolefully embraces the theme of death and regeneration with the instincts of a rotten child. Filmed in a dire black and white achromatous, we are visually seared into a kind of neolithic t.v. screen or a dog's eye view of the world. As the camera numbly stalks a cabin in the woods with a morbid, Weegee progression, we are seized into the terror of an ongoing and woefully graphic deathlessness—a sheeted figure convulses amid his own viscera, black blood and dank organs, vomit and excrement, hacking away at himself with a straight razor. These first twelve or fifteen minutes virtually trill with the supreme intimacy of its horror; it's the kind of exalted nightmare quality that would darkly etherize the rest of our day had it come to us in our beds, and, like a William S. Burroughs\Samuel Beckett collaboration on celluloid, the grim fastidiousness of his trembling limbs, the tediousness of his decay and the blood on the walls make this a brilliantly envisioned few minutes...But here's where the dog comes in. For the next 60 odd minutes, Merhige indulges himself in a vapid universality hatched of the New Age\Flower Power zeitgeist. The "characters," *God-Killing-Himself*, *Mother Earth*, *Son-of-Man-Flesh-On-Bones* (or whatever) and an assortment of mumenshantz-like creatures jerk, crawl and drag nowhere special, doing nothing in particular, finally reminding me that the philosopher Hobbes was wrong: man does not fear a violent death, but a silly one (choking to death on a Flintstones chewable, say, or being trampled to death by clowns at a barn dance). Taken as a whole, **BEGOTTEN** is a silly movie full of scenes shot remorselessly from every angle for unendurable periods of time to stretch out the exhilarated nightfalls, tremors,



shitting, bleeding, dragging, muttering, beating, organ mashing, rape of the earth, etc. It should have been 15 minutes of interesting footage, instead, the power of the opening shots is entirely diffused. I kept envisioning the film without its bleach and chrome injection, and I laughed...Let's put it this way; watching **BEGOTTEN** is like being locked in the trunk of a car. Once the terror subsides you are left with a sickly boredom and little air with which to yawn. Furthermore, its pretentiousness begs for parody. Here we have a deep, deep message and primitive (need I say reductionist?) insight into the world's brutal systems: God takes a long weekend and stays in a cottage borrowed from a friend's parents. Birds chirp. He decides to kill himself, but none of the razors are sharp enough. Mother Earth, in a wacky Mardi Gras

mask, gives God a blow job (what is this, a Fleetwood Mac video?). She gets knocked up. Birds chirp. Her son, mankind, is a parasitic punker with epilepsy. She drags him around by the neck until bad, evil men with giant Q-tips come to rape her—she is Mother Earth after all—and to beat him senseless, if that's possible (throw in some crucifixion visuals for that added, extra depth we all so enjoy). Bad, evil beekeepers pick up from there, jarring and preserving a variety of internal organs for future retail distribution. Sun sets. Birds chirp. To be honest with you, I forget how it ends. Or does it?...As you can see, Merhige is a visionary in search of a plot, or does he think plots and ideas and western civilization are dead? Anyway, if he plays his cards right he might land an "Eternity" perfume commercial. —Joan Mathieu

THRILL KILL VIDEO CLUB. "How To Shoot a Snuff Film" (1991; Surf Reality Productions, P.O. Box 20708, Tompkins Square, NY NY 10009-8974; 1991). This homegrown concoction from the depths of the East Village was actually tossed together by a pack of friends in only one day. And though all of it seems totally improvised—usually a bad sign—the result is quite amusing (that is, if the idea of making a snuff film is your idea of big laughs. I know it is for me!). It all begins when four murderous psychos have a chance encounter and decide to pool their homicidal tendencies and make a snuff movie. They lure in victims by putting an ad in Backstage Magazine, and after covering their apartment with plastic drop-clothes (don't want to make a mess, do we?), the quartet begins their auditions. And we're privy to the absolute WORST line-up of two-bit artistes that you've ever WANTED to see savagely killed. Including pathetic comedians, dog acts, spoon players, performance artists, political orators, and the most hilarious interpretation of "Delilah" I've ever seen! The Poster Boys even turn up as a trio of potential corpses, and hit the humor highwater mark... Though overlong and scattershot, director Robert Prichard manages to keep the "plot" zipping along. Most importantly, the entire starring quartet (Todd Alcott, Debra Kaplan, Chuck Montgomery, and Frank Senger) is first-rate, and make the most appealing pack of mass murderers I've encountered all week. But be forewarned: The sight of hefty Frank Senger lounging on his couch in his underwear is supremely terrifying, and I'm just glad I hadn't eaten before experiencing it... This cool, loose comedy is happily unpretentious and filled with bloodthirsty humor. Plus it shows you what you can accomplish if you're halfway creative and get off your ass for an afternoon. Too bad they didn't leave much room open for a sequel. —Steve Puchalski

GOLIATHON a.k.a. THE MIGHTY PEKING MAN (1977). Unbelievable! This flick is one of the worst, funniest chunks of crapola I've seen this issue! A Hong Kong-lensed, KING KONG wannabee, and an instant fave! This idiotic tale begins somewhere in India, when a 10-story-tall gorilla rips his way out of the earth and attacks a town of towelheads. And believe it or not, the monkey suit is less convincing than the seedy one they found for KING KONG VS. GODZILLA! Immediately, a pack of enterprising, dubiously-dubbed Hong Kong businessmen (led by our hero, Johnny Feng) head into the wilderness in an effort to capture the creature. But these clods are so inept that most of their expedition is dead before they even locate this giant, moth-eaten "Peking Man" (a tiger eats one, another gets stepped on by an elephant, still another boob slips off a cliff). And just as they get close, enter a gorgeous Swedish blonde (casting couch candidate Evelyne Kraft) wearing a skimpy animal skin bikini like Georgina of the Jungle. Of course, Johnny Feng isn't a complete idiot, so he follows the luscious lady and learns that she was lost in the jungle as a tot and raised by the huge Goliathon. And if you think this is as stupid as the movie can possibly get (I almost did a Spit Take with my beer when this Scandinavian chick came swinging in on a vine), you haven't heard nothin' yet! As our Jungle Queen's costume gets more and more ragged, Johnny gets more and more infatuated, and after taking Goliathon for a WALK to the nearest big city, they eventually all head back to Hong Kong, where the viewer is treated to a jaw-dropping finale at a monster truck rally with Goliathon as the star attraction. Let's not forget Goliathon's escape and wild romp through Miniaturetown! The far-from-special effects are beyond belief, and from the hideously matched stock footage to the Matchbox-sized tanks, it's incompetence as far as the eye can see! There's no attempt at continuity (one moment they're in the jungle, the next the Big Guy is terrorizing a city), and it seems to have been edited together by a drunken Ginsu chef. The only thing the filmmakers got right was the cheesecake aspect. Kraft wears that same ratty bikini throughout, even when she's roaming city streets (with nothing but her talent to keep it from falling off), and there are copious close-ups of her butt when she's climbing a tree, or when she's bitten by a cobra on the inner thigh. Plus, you haven't lived until you've heard the terrifying Love Theme from GOLIATHON, "Could It Be I'm In, Could It Be I'm In Love?". Starring Li Hsui-Hsien (who also had the title role in INFRA-MAN) as Feng, and directed by Ho Meng-Hua (REVENGE OF THE ZOMBIES, THE FLYING GUILLOTINE), this is a colossal achievement in celluloid camp! I still don't believe it! —Steve Puchalski

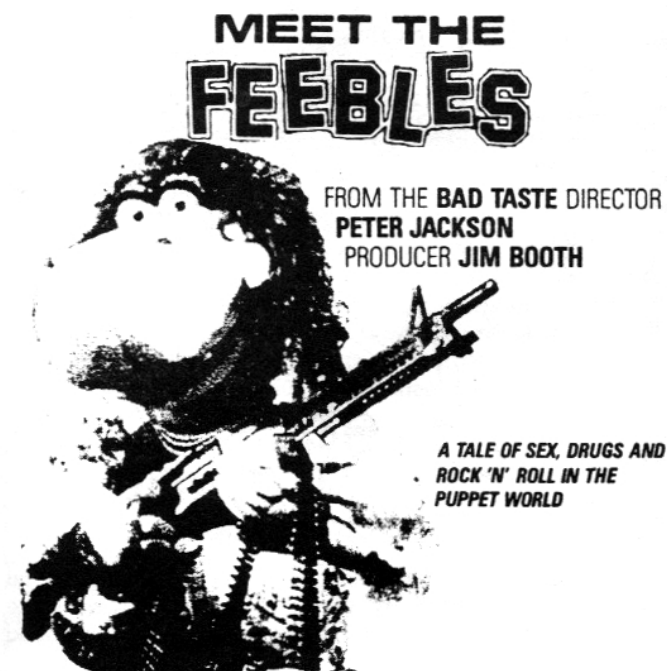


TUSK (1980) and THE RAINBOW THIEF (1991). If you didn't know from previous edition of SHOCK CINEMA, I happen to LOVE the films of Alexandro Jodorowsky! After experiencing EL TOPO, SANTA SANGRE and (most importantly) THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, I was convinced the guy was one of the most demented geniuses of modern cinema. Whether you like his work or not, after you've sat through any one of those three flicks, you'll never forget 'em! I promise. So when I ran across copies of two of this Chilean auteurs unreleased features, TUSK and THE RAINBOW THIEF, I was in heaven. And after watching both of 'em, I can honestly say that Jodorowsky is definitely NOT a constant artiste. Because these two pics are the pits! I can fully understand why no U.S. distributor would touch 'em!... Even though my print of TUSK was in French with NO subtitles, you really don't need a translation in order to get the gist of this self-termed "fable panique". Set in turn-of-the-century India, Jodorowsky drops most of his crazed mystical/religious/hallucinogenic stylings in order to tell a relatively straightforward story of a little girl, Elise, and a little elephant, Tusk, both of whom are born at the same time, and how their lives interconnect over the years (yawn). It begins on a good note, with Jodorowsky intercutting an elephant and a woman giving birth, but the movie swiftly turns into nothing more than a Disney G-rated nature film, with most of the \$5 million budget going for Elephants-Are-Us rentals. There are a few sledgehammer-subtle points about French colonialism vs. the forces of nature, with Anton Diffring playing the girl's tyrannical father and a nutty Indian medicine man popping up for comic relief. But for most of this debacle's interminable two hour running time all we're fed are long scenes of big animals lumbering around the countryside. When the little girl grows up, she discovers a psychic link to Tusk the Elephant when she stops it in its tracks during a rampage, but NONE of Jodorowsky's crackpot enlightenment or savage grotesqueries from his other epics is on display here. Instead, it takes all too many predictable routes, such as Elise getting kidnapped by the buffoonish bad guys (they're the ones who don't respect elephants), with our heroic packyderm saving her life. Perhaps the problem lies in the fact Jodorowsky was

adapting a novel entitled "Poo Lorn of the Elephants", which, for all I know was some shitty children's book. Maybe Jodorowsky was so desperate to get behind a camera after all his failed attempts at DUNE, that he grabbed the first thing to come along. Or maybe he simply wanted a free trip to India...At least I figured his latest effort, the England-based THE RAINBOW THIEF, would've gotten a nominal play-off, instead of collecting dust for over a year. Because even if it lacks the caustic edge of Jodorowsky's personal projects, this is his first feature with a big-name cast, including the ever haggard Peter O'Toole (who's always good for a laugh at his own expense), Omar Sharif and Christopher Lee. Yet once again, by the time it was all over, I was pretty damned disappointed. Though if I can overlook all the lighthearted, saccharin moments, at least there were a few bizarre sequences to keep my attention from drifting...It begins GREAT, with Chris Lee (cast against type) as a rich ol' codger hosting a party for his relatives and his dogs (all sitting at the same dinner table), and afterward Madame Rainbow and her girls are called in as desert, with Lee ending up in bed with eight naked whores and a severe heart attack. So far, so weird. Then we meet the heir to the estate (Peter O'Toole as Lee's mad nephew), who lives in the sewer tunnels, leaves Tarot cards in his wake, stumbles through the proceedings while conversing with a doggie hand puppet, and even gets to sing (horribly) "On Moonlight Bay". And Omar Sharif is on board as Deemar, a ragamuffin thief who doubles as O'Toole's servant. There isn't much of a plot to speak of—Omar occasionally goes above ground to steal something, and O'Toole & Sharif squabble endlessly. But it always ends on a sickly note of how much they actually care for each other, with the film nearly curdling itself whenever Sharif turns up his "lovable old coot" routine. Eventually O'Toole is left high and dry after Uncle kicks off, the rains come, their sewer paradise floods, and in a stultifyingly suspenseless climax, Sharif tries to save O'Toole from drowning in his own tired mannerisms. There's even a sappy ending that'll have any good Jodorowsky fan chuckin' their empties at the screen. Sharif looks extremely old, O'Toole looks extremely doped up (so what else is new?), and both appear utterly confused. At least Jodorowsky tosses in subplots involving a crazed dwarf, a giant, a gypsy fortune teller, and a street carnival (which only made me long for the excesses of SANTA SANGRE). But even though this simple(minded) little mess is occasionally amusing, it's hard to believe it was created by the same guy who turned us inside out with THE HOLY MOUNTAIN...Now all I have to do is locate Jodorowsky's 'lost' premiere effort, FANDO AND LIS. But I'm a little more wary about that prospect than I was only a few months ago. —Steve Puchalski

MEET THE FEEBLES (1990). The second feature from warped New Zealander Peter Jackson is even more impressive and disgusting than his first gorefest, BAD TASTE. That premiere effort reveled in its own excesses, and MEET THE FEEBLES is no different. In addition, Jackson has refined his technique while setting his demented sights on show business in general, and The Muppets in particular. It's no surprise that the flick never found a U.S. distributor. First off, Jim Henson's estate would've tried to sue their asses off for this searing satire. Plus, if right-wing, do-gooder shithheads fly off the handle about SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT's killer Santa, think how they'd react to horny, murderous, coke-snorting puppets!...In this world there isn't a human being in sight, and the viewer is taken backstage to The Feebles Variety

Hour. On the surface, it's just another Muppet Show take-off, populated with cutesy characters like Harry the Rabbit, Heidi the Hippo, and a menagerie of odd creatures, both big and small. All of them are preparing for opening night of their new stage show, with shy newcomer Robert the Porcupine finding himself smitten with a poodle in the chorus. But once offstage, their lifestyle gets a tad more gritty. They smoke, swear, drink copiously (like any good Kiwi resident), and take interspecies sex to hilariously graphic limits. The lizard knife thrower is in need of a fix, and has Vietnam flashbacks. An elephant and a chicken are involved in a paternity suit. Others are dealing cocaine. And there are moments of intense puppet gore, like when one character dissolves into a puddle after snorting Borax. But it's the sexual aspect of the storyline that truly boggles the mind! Such as Trevor the Rat's hobby of making fetish porno movies in the basement, complete with a cow dressed in leather (isn't that redundant?). Or Harry the Rabbit's orgies, during which he contracts a sexual disease that leaves him covered in oozing lesions and puking green bile on the stage. Hmmm, better family fare I couldn't imagine...It's an endless parade of show biz/cinema cliches, all expertly integrated into this jaw-dropping yarn. And even if Jackson doesn't always hit the target, he blasts away at EVERY goddamn thing in sight with his sawed-off-shotgun sense of humor. The flick is crammed with inspired (not to mention astonishingly sick) sight gags, such as when the walrus/producer eats a singing fish in the middle of its audition, and then vomits it up later. And when Jackson unleashes a puppet version of THE DEER HUNTER's P.O.W. Russian Roulette sequence, you KNOW you're in



the presense of pure, schlock genius...All the creatures are expertly crafted, and the long list of technicians have to be applauded for manipulating the extensive cast of characters. Some are just too damaged to be believed, like a giant talking fly which is first glimpsed sitting in a stopped-up toilet bowl, gobbling down shit with a spoon! It's a fully realized vision which takes every avenue to the limits of good taste (yeah!) and ends with a climax so blood-drenched and nihilistic that it makes THE WILD BUNCH look like a church picnic. Scathing, gruesome, four-star entertainment! —Steve Puchalski

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD (1968). It certainly sounded like a great idea. Take three trendy directors at the height of their arthouse popularity—Roger Vadim, Louis Malle and Federico Fellini—and give 'em each an Edgar Allen Poe story to adapt. Because if Roger Corman could fill theatres with his string of Poe tales, think what type of Euro-weirdness this trio of highbrows could concoct. Well, the artsy results are extremely mixed, and all three episodes are high on atmosphere and low on coherence. But for folks on the lookout for trashy pretentiousness, this flick has NO equal...It kicks off with Vadim's "Metzengerstein", starring Jane Fonda (still in her BARBARELLA-blond sex kitten phase) as a noblewoman prone to lewd adventures. Her curiosity is aroused by a reclusive neighbor, and in a brilliant casting choice, brother Peter

Fonda plays this focus of her fixation. It's the only time the siblings have acted together, and though neither were exactly top-notch thespians in their youth (then again, they still aren't), their characters' attraction to each other takes on a bizarre, vaguely incestuous edge. Unfortunately, when Peter is accidentally killed by Jane's actions, the whole piece grinds to a crawl, with Jane obsessing to his memory and dreaming of a black stallion. While Corman would've kept the proceedings lively with a few cheap thrills, Vadim's idea of suspense is watching a tapestry being rewoven. Ho hum. At least the costumes are super, with Peter supremely groovy in his leather pants, and Jane literally poured into her steamy, peek-a-boo wardrobe... Louis Malle's "William Wilson" is much more primal in nature, with Alain Delon as the shitbag title character. Even as a child, li'l William was a brat, heading up the pack of schoolyard bullies and getting his rocks off by lowering underclassmen into a vat full of rats! And as an adult he's nothing but a pompous, egotistical, sadistic, cad/gambler/scoundrel/womanizer. The centerpiece of the episode is a card game between him and black-haired Bridget Bardot—who heats up the proceedings by wagering her own body. But Wilson's fun is interrupted when a goody-goody doppelganger enters the scene, and the two rivals battle it out for domination. Would you believe the movie plays WORSE than it sounds? Though not without its perverse moments, this is slow, laborious swill without an ounce of subtlety... But DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL, FOLKS! Because the best (and wildest) is saved for last in Fellini's "Toby Dammit" ("liberally adapted" from Edgar's "Don't Wager Your Head to the Devil"). Federico kicks out all the stops for this dark and hilarious tale, filling the screen with his bizarre images and grotesque characters, while avoiding all the smarmy nostalgia which infected his later work. Set in modern day, Terence Stamp stars as a drunken, reclusive movie star on a visit to Italy, and as the press and his fans fawn over him, we observe it all through his burnt-out, bloodshot eyes. The tripped-out camerawork by Guiseppe Rotunno captures a barrage of encounters, including palm readers, nuns, photographers, vapid TV interviewers, and (in the most chilling moments) a demonic little girl bouncing a large white ball. The entire tale is utterly disorienting, from its unsettling camera angles to the stylized lighting, and the piece climaxes when this sot hops into his Ferrari and takes us on a high-speed, bumper-cam tour of the town. At the eye of this turbulence is the incredible Stamp, who looks like he just awoke from a gutter, guzzles liquor non-stop, spouts cynical non-sequiturs, and finds himself on a hallucinogenic descent into hell. It's the coolest! In addition to being the one BIG reason to search out this trilogy. —Steve Puchalski

PUSS BUCKET (1991). Director Lisa Houle has certainly come up with something---I'm still not sure WHAT exactly it is, but there's a streak of warped genius running throughout it. Claiming to be "from the Broadway musical", PUSS BUCKET takes us into the hick lives of long-haired, dim-witted dirtbag brothers, Judas and Corned Beef, and shows us how their lives are changed when they have a religious vision. In truth, it's just a visitation from a woman in a UFO, but this pair is so incomprehensibly stupid that they don't know the difference (I guess they didn't notice the big spaceship hovering over their hovel). Their holy mission is to collect the Blessed Puss (in a bucket, of course, hence the title) from humans, and thus save the world. Eventually the duo go to The Big City for fresh victims (starting with a Dyanetics transvestite) and even hit the bar scene (in particular, The Scrap Bar). The gore begins to flow as their dementia rises, and the brothers reminded me of psychotic, in-bred grandkin of Ma and Pa Kettle. Their funniest moments are when the characters break into song and dance in the middle of the schlock action ("I love to work for Jesus./ I do it every day./ Eat, sleep and live for Jesus./ Kill for him, those who will betray.")... It's obvious that Lisa must've had a severe Catholic school upbringing, or some similar shock to the nervous system when she was young. And her scathing sense of humor is prevalent in every frame. The film is packed with original moments, but at 90 exhausting minutes, it could've been severely cut, such as an entire unnecessary subplot involving a nerdy scientist. It also has the same weaknesses as most independently-financed projects---many of the sets look like someone's living room, and the sound looping is so badly matched that it's like watching a Toho monster movie. But the film floored me with its incredible editing and camerawork, and unlike most underground items which are nothing but cheap gags and gross-out shocks (which this flick is no stranger to, such as the TV evangelist who rips off his own finger in order to get pledges), Lisa incorporates several elegant, hallucinogenic sequences into the tale. And her more evil moments capture a dark, dreamlike realm that fits beautifully within the murderous scenario. All in all, a mind-boggling saga which, what it lacks in consistency, makes up for in dazzling imagery! --Steve Puchalski



NORTHVILLE CEMETARY MASSACRE (1974). Director William Dear started his career on the right foot, with this wonderfully nasty flick. Since he went on to make the cringeable HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS, you can't help but wonder what happened to the guy---slow-acting brain damage? No matter, because this no-name, low-budget cycle-rama is savage stuff, and long after the biker genre of the late '60s/early '70s had dried up like so much spilt beer, this winner snuck into rural dives... A thoroughly grubby (but way cool) cycle gang named The Spirits enters the town of Northville and are immediately tossed into the slammer by the jerkwater cops for riding without helmets. But surprisingly, these bikers aren't easily antagonized by The Man or other rural pinheads. They're just fun-loving punks who like the freedom of the road and a little good grass. It's the police who are the fuckin' animals, even going so far as to rape a young girl and blame it on the bikers. Of course, when the piss-ant townfolk hear about the rape, they get Vigilante Fever! And as tensions and misconceptions escalate, the bloodshed begins, with "motorcycle mongoloids" blasted to bits and hidden bloodpacks gushing everywhere. It gets pretty bloodthirsty, folks, and we haven't even gotten to the big cemetery finale, which is more vicious than even I expected! Ultimately, the entire thing is pretty shocking because, just as it is in the real world, there are no heroes, pat answers or happy endings when it comes to narrow-minded hatred and blind authority. The epilogue puts it best: "Freedom: R.I.P."... One particularly demented sidebar to the action has The Spirits encountering a psycho survivalist gun salesman who keeps his arms collection hidden behind a huge American flag. But much of the film

has an easygoing, ingratiating flavor, as in its realistic depiction of the cycle lifestyle. And since there's no dominant character, it's virtually an ensemble piece (which makes the conclusion all the more numbing). A crude, but effective throwback to the left-wing attitude of earlier days, with its razored cynicism making it the perfect funeral wreath to the biker movie phenomenon...Co-starring The Scorpions Motorcycle Club of Detroit, with ex-Monkee Michael Nesmith providing the soundtrack. —Steve Puchalski

RED (1991). In the previous issue of SHOCK, I raved about Chrstian Gore's short film, OUCH! Well, the editor of FILM THREAT has returned from behind the camera with this new half-hour ode to the legendary Red Tapes. Just in case you aren't familiar with The Red Tapes, they're an audio record of an incredible series of prank phone calls to Red, the bartender at the Tube Bar. They begin simple, asking "Is Al Koholic there?". Then "Stu Pidd", "Cole Kutz", et cetera. And it eventually escalates into a foul-mouthed barrage from Red ("Ya motherfucker, cocksucker. I'll open your belly up and I'll show you all the black stuff ya got in there..."). Well, Gore decided to put a visual image to it all, and he couldn't have found anyone better to play the abused bartender than Lawrence Tierney, whose big, bald, angry presense is the perfect embodiment of the pissed-off, savage-tongued Red. And with his shaved head, the guy looks like the second-coming of Tor Johnson. Then Gore decides to utilize the same b&w still-frame style used in Chris Marker's classic LA JETEE (Gore may steal, but at least he steals from the best). Too bad it just doesn't hold together for a full 35 minutes. Since the actual Red Tapes are utilized, they're good for some stoopid laughs, but even though Gore brings texture to the barroom setting (hmmm, you'd almost think he'd spent a lotta time in 'em), it's all totally uninspiring. Even the fictionalized wrap-up (when Tierney encounters a kid claiming to be the infamous caller) left me cold. A great idea, nicely-lensed, but still a big disappointment. —Steve Puchalski

MACUNAIMA a.k.a. BRAZIL DEVOURS BRAZIL, or as the ever-exploiting New Line Cinemas released the pic, JUNGLE FREAKS (1969). This is a film about cannibalism. But not cannibalism in the normal culinary sense, because this strange, surrealistic arthouse obscurity from South America takes as its central topics social, political and economic cannibalism, where one level of society "devours" another in an effort to succeed. Heavy stuff? Not exactly, because any possibility of pretentious rhetoric is coated by a crazy quilt of insane logic. And even though director Joachim Pedro de Andrade lacks filmmaking expertise, he slaps together a hodgepodge resembling Gabriel Garcia Marquez by way of Benny Hill, with loads of campy laughs, slapstick humor, and a plot as mind-bogglingly satiric as Dusan Makavejev...Beginning in the Brazilian jungle, our title character, Macunaima, is born fully grown, plopping onto the hut floor from between his mother's legs. This butt-ugly "infant" spends his days sucking on a pacifier and being ignored by his family, until one day he transforms into a handsome white prince (complete with princely top clothes) and the local sexpot immediately straps him on for a ride. Unfortunately, this change is only temporary and soon he's eating pig entrails again and abandoned by his family. In the jungle, he encounters a fat ogre who gives Macunaima a meaty strip of his own leg to eat. (Confused? Join the club.) Later, a magic geyser turns his skin permanently white, just in time for him to hit The Big City, where the movie shifts into a wacky fish-out-of-water comedy. Mac has a tete de tete with a female revolutionary who makes baby carriage bombs (one of which explodes a tad early). While mourning the death of his wife, a gaggle of bikini'd bimbos suddenly kidnaps him for a raft ride. And in the film's major set piece, Macunaima puts on a dress in order to rob a buffoonish "Cannibal Giant" (in fact, a nefarious industrialist), who enjoys tossing his party guests into a swimming pool full of carnivorous fish. Everything is turned inside out in this crazed fantasy—moments of tragedy turn comic, slapstick is given a surreal edge, and if I was more familiar with South America, I'm sure I'd get more out of the pic's obvious socio-political bent. Instead, it has to succeed simply on nodgin'-scratchin' strangeness and its loss of innocence storyline. Macunaima is nearly consumed by "civilization" and greed (in fact, he returns to his native village loaded down with cheap appliances and an electric guitar—I hope he has a long extension cord), and his adventures are pocked with a parade of whacked gags (and plenty of deadly dry moments too)...I wouldn't exactly call this a great, or even good film. But it's certainly unique in a scattershot way that defies comprehension. —Steve Puchalski



COMMUNION IN ROOM 410 (1988). I've seen ads for this home-lensed short from filmmaker Joe Christ for several years, and it always looked excessively grim. Well, now that I've managed to endure it, I can report firsthand that it IS. And though it clocks in at only about 15 minutes, to most folks, it'll seem like hours. The movie is underground moviemaking at its crudest, with a washed-out video image, no sync sound, and no discernible artistic value. Primarily just a long static shot of the three stars (Mary Leohr, Joe Christ and Dana) sitting along a table, with a painting of Jesus behind 'em. The happy-go-lucky trio spends most of the time slicing up their own arms and each other's, as the industrial soundtrack drones on and on. Mary (a mondo-hefty Goth Queen) receives most of the cuts, and then licks clean her open wounds as Dana sloppily chugs back shots of the fresh blood. Eventually they get around to carving up Mary's flabby breast, and (if you don't get the picture yet), this is basically a freak show with ugly people doing sadistic things to each other, made by a Richard Kern wannabee. There isn't a lick of cinematic style or substance to behold (but there sure is lotsa blood). And at the end they eat some Wonder Bread, thus completing their "communion". I have to admit, the act of carving yourself up holds a fascination for me, but this film never actually (pardon the pun) gets under the skin of its leads. In addition, the picture quality is so fuzzy you can't make out a lot of the details. At least there's a great theme song, "Wonderful Life" by Joe Christ and The Healing Faith...But you know, strange as it might seem, I never really got the idea that these people on screen were doing anything too bizarre. Because right in the middle of watching this grim escapade (on a Saturday

morning, no less), I got a knock on my apartment door and was set upon by a pair of Jehovah's Witnesses, who wouldn't stop yapping, even as I was slamming the door on 'em. Going back to the movie, I realized at least the filmmakers were doing their own thing in the privacy of their own home, and they weren't a fraction as irritating as those door-to-door religious cretins...Oh well, best of luck to Joe Christ on his next endeavor. Let's hope it's thought out a little better than his first. —Steve Puchalski

MISTER KEYES BIZARRE BREAD AND BUTTER. As a departure from the normal Keyes' Crew accounts of sordid moviegoing escapades, we travel into the demented regions of unusual employment. Finding the Crew's budget tapped and legit prospects limited, the Voice beckoned and we answered the call to a white sweatshop factory building on the corner of Brooklyn and Manhattan. The calls made indicated a video editing job of no fixed subject matter, but a glimpse at the lobby directory spelled it all out—BIZARRE. Bizarre Video, to be exact, a distributor specializing in my favorite kind of porn—fetish, bondage, water sports, latex wedgies—just pure entertainment. After a brief meeting with the hopped-up supervisor and a tour of the luxurious facility, featuring a 'no-speak English' assortment of forklift operators and props from past efforts (the Medieval Torture Rack in front of the main office was my favorite), we got our assignment—to dissect old films, to seek out new combinations, to boldly rip off a pathetic consumer with something they've seen before. In the meager edit room (and the impressive mass duplication fortress), the prime directives, inspired by numerous state legislature rulings, were posted; NO erections on screen, NO personal intrusions unless battery operated, NO piercing of, well, anything ON SCREEN (long live implied piercing), oh, and no weights on balls. O.K., holding back a cerebral hemorrhage, we go to work. Encouraged to 'be creative', I created a title for my shameless repackaging of turgid transvestite bondage, and presto, "Power of the Leather Mistress" was born. After a short perusal of the tape library (where the Dewey Decimal System had been replaced by such designations as 'Wet and Wild', 'She-Male Soft and Hard' and 'Big Tit Spanking'), we found our selections (I was tempted to use the 'Avengers' episode they owned just because Diana Rigg was wearing leather). Soon we had slapped together an exciting melange of torrid non-explicit shenanigans involving various confused participants. My frequent snoozing during the editing process was interrupted by Orwellian speakerphone assignments ("We need 50 'Bound in Latex' for New Mexico by 4") and the ominous security cameras gave the whole office that '7-11' feel. The Crew wishes it could've stayed with the slap-happy folks at "Bizarre", but due to exciting new adventures (another job), we had to say goodbye to the chance of a lunchtime, but we will always remember with fondness that 'TV' isn't always television, that jewelry can be worn in unusual places, and that "Lesbian Dungeon Submission" just is not as exciting as it sounds.



THE CURSE OF HER FLESH (1967). By far, this film is the best of Michael & Roberta Findlay's infamous Flesh Trilogy (the bookending chronicles being THE TOUCH OF HER FLESH and THE KISS OF HER FLESH), and it's possibly the best work either director ever produced—blowing away their larger budgeted (i.e. over twelve dollars) '70s dreck such as SHRIEK OF THE MUTILATED, and even Roberta's later works like TENEMENT and LURKERS...From its first, crude moments you're transported into a sleaze-induced euphoria, and the film never lets up or disappoints. A perfect example of undiluted, 4-star exploitation, beginning with strobe lights, go-go music, and two chicks gyrating away in nothing but garter belts with dollar bills pasted over their privates. Then we meet one-eyed Richard Jennings as Joe the Sadist, whose mission is to rid the planet of "evil, perverted, decadent filth" and "cancerous scum". And his favorite pastime is murdering strippers in unusual ways—like with a harpoon gun! The entire movie follows this simple construction: Intercut [1] strip club acts, [2] some mild, sadomasochistic sex games (usually with two naked girls), and [3] Jennings killing babes at random. And when the film stock runs out, toss a hand-scrawled end credit onto the screen...It's a heaping helping of rough sex and even-rougher murder, without any flinching, including a little bondage, a razor-edged dildo, and even masturbation with a squash (hence the title of the mind-altering film-within-a-film, "Squash Crazy"). But the Findlay's achieve more than just simple slop for the Sticky Seat Crowd, because the movie is often perched at a surreal level of incompetency and makeshift brilliance. The voyeuristic camerawork is documentary-like (re: grainy and hand-held); there's an expansive use of jump cuts (a nice way of saying bad splices and disregard for any semblance of continuity); and a jazzy sax score cruises over the foreplay. Plus, I haven't even gotten to the more hilarious aspects! Characters appear and die for no apparent reason! In the middle of a long dramatic sequence, Jennings suddenly appears from behind a folding wall (I guess he was hiding there for weeks)! The dialogue is incredible ("That's a nice little pussy you have there," Jennings says to a naked bimbo, whose cat is curled up on her lap. "Everyone who sees my pussy likes it," she replies, "and sometimes I play with it for hours.")! And the innovative camerawork is dizzying, particularly the finale fight on the back of a moving flatbed truck! Wow!...This flick is a mind boggler of misogyny and sadism! Barely an hour long, but crammed with insane moments. In simple terms, an sexploitation epic! —Steve Puchalski

TWO EVIL EYES on The Deuce. I'd been waiting all too long for this uniting of horror's two kingpins, George Romero and Dario Argento, so when it finally got its NYC release, there was only one possible place to check it out—the Selwyn theatre on beautiful 42nd Street! There's no way I'd see this item in a real, respectable moviehouse. Hell, the three remaining 42nd St. grindhouses rarely ever show anything sleazy anymore, just first-run dreck on double bills, so this might be one of the last chances to wallow in a solid horrorama, complete with our favorite mix of clientele—alcoholics, addicts, insomniacs, and trash-film mavens. So equipped with our standard tote bag full o' beer, we welcomed that friendly stench of ammonia...Well, TWO EVIL EYES was playing on a double bill with a lump of Hollywood swill, SHATTERED, and even though we walked in at the midpoint of that pic, I quickly realized we hadn't missed a goddamned thing. Though its ads called it the thriller of the year, it's actually just another piece of Tinseltown tripe regurgitated to the masses. The entire cast is wasted, and even though Greta Sacchi is sizzling, there's too little of her particular charms to make us forget we're wasting our time on a ridiculous piece o' shit made for mall-fed cretins. Most of the audience snored through it, a guy in front of us spent the entire film picking at his shoelace lethargically, and

even the drugged-up Selwyn crowd (who normally couldn't pass an EKG) was able to figure out the ludicrous "surprise" ending. If nothing else, this lame excuse for a movie gave me an ample opportunity to empty my bladder, being careful to avoid the junkie in the aisle seat, who started the evening by shooting up and then spent the rest of the night hawking up phlegm onto the floor. I quickly eyed the concession stand, but wisely avoided the grey hot dogs and the friendly (er, make that, recently-incarcerated) staff, and just made a bee-line to the mens' room, which is usually laced with a stench that could only emanate from a wino's large intestine...But onto **TWO EVIL EYES**, a two-part tale, with Romero and Argento taking turns adapting Edgar Allen Poe. Romero had the first shot, and fumbles the ball. Sadly, it's probably the lamest piece of celluloid I've ever seen his name on. Filmed on the quick, like **CREEPSHOW 2**, it's so inept you begin to feel sorry for ol' George. It doesn't help matters it features one of the worst actresses to ever blight the screen, Adrienne Barbeau, who's looking more like a leathery lizard every year. She plays the slutty wife of dying ol' man Valdemar, and when hubbie croaks, Adrienne stuffs him in the basement freezer so she can collect the inheritance. Of course, his spirit lives on to spook Barbeau. Ho hum. The thing was so involving that I nearly woke up. Romero obviously wants to prove that he can do more than gross-out zombie-thons, but he's not gonna get anything but unemployment checks if he keeps churning out this rubbish. It's wretched, obvious and DULL. Plus, when Dario's segment kicks in, it only makes Romero's look all the tamer, with in-your-face style and gory effects slamming home in a wonderfully grisly prologue. Not to mention a cast consisting of people who can actually act! Harvey Keitel stars as Rod Usher, a sleazybag photojournalist who's obsessed with gory crime photos. Sick of his girlfriend's ornery black cat, Keitel kills the kitty (not before taking pictures while he's torturing it, sweet guy that he is), and begins to go mad. Soon he's downing Mescal for breakfast, wearing a pompous French beret, having hallucinations of previous lives, and when his sweetie gets on his nerves, he knocks her off too (in a great gross sequence involving kitchen knives), and walls her up in their apartment. Too bad the ghost of that damned cat keeps intervening on his peace and quiet. The story is pretty slight, without many narrative surprises, but there are some nicely disgusting set pieces and Keitel is a highlight. It's always fun to watch Harvey going bonkers, and this is no exception. Though no one in sight is gonna win any subtlety awards, the supporting cast is chock full of familiar faces (Martin Balsam, John Amos, Sally Kirkland). It's nothing earth-shaking, because Dario seems to have held his more wicked sensibilities in check for this project. Too bad, because this pic probably had better distribution than any of his previous work...The overall verdict: Romero's sucks, Argento's is fair fun, but for Poe adaptations, I'd recommend digging up an old Roger Corman pic first. —Steve Puchalski

TRIBULATION 99: ALIEN ANOMALIES UNDER AMERICA (1991). Now HERE'S a difficult film to describe, but I recommend it wholeheartedly! Craig Baldwin has pieced together a sense-damaging melange that had me in rapture from beginning to end! Exclusively utilizing found footage (which he laces together like a bad trip), Baldwin gives us the whole truth about the "upcoming apocalypse", mixing the paranoia of Oliver Stone with the technique of Bruce Connor. This 50-minute mindfucker is broken into 99 hilarious, sense-barraging rants, and at that rate, if you take your eyes off the screen for even an instant, you'll miss something incredible. Baldwin pulls his images from areas as

diverse as science fiction B-movies, nature documentaries, natural disasters, and educational diagrams, then lashes it all together into a paranoia-inducing roller coaster which links together every fringe lunatic theory I could imagine. His all-too-believable thesis involves alien beings who've burrowed into the hollows of the earth and have been infiltrating mutants throughout Central America. And while titles are flashed across the screen (such as "Demons Released From the Depths of Hell" or "Pagan Necromancy"), Baldwin somehow takes U.S./Latin American policy for the past 40 years, and manages to attribute it all to an alien conspiracy involving C.I.A. assassins, spontaneous combustion, J.F.K.'s murder, the Bermuda Triangle, voodoo rituals, and the clear fact that Fidel Castro is an android! Everyone is involved, from E. Howard Hunt and Oliver North, to Jim Jones and The Hideous Sun Demon, and this miasma pulls the viewer in and doesn't release 'em until their brain has been wrung dry and refilled with high-octane insanity. This is true SubGenius-level brilliance, fueled by Craig's editing savvy. And he's created an indelible achievement which is utterly draining and altogether dazzling! —Steve Puchalski

TRIBULATION 99: ALIEN ANOMALIES UNDER AMERICA



UFO • JFK • CIA

BARN OF THE NAKED DEAD a.k.a. TERROR CIRCUS (1973). Alan Rudolph has made some great movies, such as **CHOOSE ME** and **THE MODERNS**. He's even proved he can hurl out popular Tinseltown pabulum like **MORTAL THOUGHTS**. But if you dig beneath his agent's bio, you'll find four-star embarrassments like **ROADIE** (Meat Loaf's dubious leading man debut), **THE PREMONITION**, and this rancid little stinker, which is as inept as they come. Rudolph must've sleepwalked through this one...Three lovely young ladies are trapped in the desert when their station wagon conks out on the way to Vegas (ooh, there's an original way to start a horror movie!), and a trio of more vapid, giggling, utterly grating women I've rarely encountered. They're picked up by the seemingly friendly Andrew Prine (I guess the girls never saw **SIMON, KING OF THE WITCHES**, or else they'd have known better), who takes 'em to his barn and promptly chains them up with all his other female 'pets'. Prine then dresses up like a circus ringleader, and has his barnful of whimpering, imprisoned women (which he proudly refers to as "the greatest animal menagerie in history") march around in circles for his amusement. And let's not forget Prine's father, who lives in a nearby shack, kills anyone who comes to visit, and is mutated from that pesky ol' H-bomb radiation (Pop looks like he spent too long under a sun lamp—like about seven months). All

in all, it's unredeeming, wall-to-wall sleaze that started to bore me after a while. The movie sticks primarily to the one location, has barely any gore effects, and any acting on the distaff side amount to rocking back and forth in a near-catatonic stupor (which could also apply to the audience after 90 minutes of this swill). At least Prine does a competent "psycho in search of a paycheck" routine, and he's particularly amusing when he gets the notion one of the new gals is his long lost mother. The best thing I can say about this movie is that just about EVERYBODY dies by the end (except for the horribly twisted monster)! That's what I really enjoy—a happy ending! —Steve Puchalski

THE SEDUCERS a.k.a. DEATH GAME (1977). First off, I love it when a movie boldly announces at the beginning that it's based on a true story, and you KNOW it's all a crock of shit! From this pic's sing-songy theme "My Good Old Dad" to its out-of-the-blue finale, it's a completely warped project from director Peter Traynor. Not just in its bizarre plot, but in its hyper-surreal handheld camerawork and rapid fire incomprehensible editing. Of course, the cast is a major plus too, featuring Sondra Locke (Clint Eastwood's old squeeze, and soon-to-be director of schlock like *RATBOY* and *IMPULSE*), Method thespian Seymour Cassel (obviously longing for his days of artsy projects, like Cassavetes' *MINNIE AND MOSKOWITZ* and *FACES*), and Colleen Camp (a fave character actress of mine from the early '70s, who popped up in everything from *THE SWINGING CHEERLEADERS* to *APOCALYPSE NOW*). In other words, I truly love this twisted tale of seduction, sadism and (physical and mental) domination...It begins when middle-aged familyman Cassel is left alone for a night, and gets to fulfill a fantasy when two sexy young ladies show up at his door, soaking wet and lost. Of course, since Seymour is a gentleman (yeah, right) he lets the two cuties in, gets them out of their wet clothes, warms 'em up with hot chocolate, and finally gets pulled into a bathtub menage a trois. The REAL fun begins when Seymour has to pay the price for his dalliance—because Sondra and Colleen are actually **DERANGED LESBIAN MURDERESSES!!** And when the next morning comes, they won't leave! Cassel gets a tad nervous when they begin shovelling down their breakfast with their bare hands, trying on his wife's clothes, and even threatening him with jailbait rape charges. But he hasn't seen nothin' yet! Wait until they tie him up, spread hideous make-up over their faces, and destroy his suburban dream home, with Camp reliving her incestuous past by calling Seymour "Daddy". Soon the entire place becomes one big madhouse, with Cassel's wet dream turning into a nightmare. This flick is one long, trippy escapade which, though amateurish on the surface, has a core of dementia that sets it apart. Locke and Camp are a wild pair, portraying two of the craziest, hottest, psychobitches in sexploitation history. And they play their roles to the hilt—breaking furniture, playing dress up, pummeling Seymour, having food fights, and turning into cruel, horny children in search of cheap kicks. And since Cassel's such an unlikable bastard, there's no sympathy for this guy's plight. Sure, you can argue that this film is crude and slapdash, but it has a disturbing, corrupting allure that I found compelling... Trivia note: Jack Fisk was a production designer and his wife Sissy Spacek a set dresser. —Steve Puchalski



DOG EAT DOG (1964). Here's a perfect example of complete and utter Euro-trash from the pre-MPAA days. It's exploitative, stupid, outrageously acted, and (somehow) highly watchable in sort of a painful way. It doesn't try to sucker you in with morality, subtlety, or even a trace of good taste—because the producer knew his audience would have none of that! Instead they got one U.S. B-actor, one aging sex symbol, and a full helping of mindless sleaze and tease!...This film doesn't waste any time either. It kicks right off, and over the title credits we're treated to Cameron Mitchell chased through dark alleyways by a convertible driven by a chuckling Italian hood who's wearing sunglasses at night, intercut with Jayne Mansfield laying on her bed in a scanty nightie, giving herself an orgasm by rolling around in stolen money. It seems that Cam, Mr. Sunglasses and Jayne just pulled off a huge heist, and since just about everyone in this flick is a dirtbag who's only out for themselves, let the backstabbing begin! All the leads flee to a nearly-deserted Greek island to settle things, and the entire paltry plot involves these unlikable, anti-social misfits fighting over Blood Money and trying to double cross each other. Whenever the flick sticks to storytelling, it's strictly routine, but the real fun lies in selected moments, such as a catfight between Jayne and a kidnapped dame, complete with hairpulling, finger-biting, and a dip in the ocean. Or the four-star dialogue, such as one guy's advice about women: "They'll rob the gold outta your teeth in your sleep!" And whenever

Cameron and Jayne get together, the sparks fly like crazy! He looks wasted, she's in need of a fat farm, but they're also the primary reasons to find this film. Jayne uses every opportunity to cram her heaving bosom in the camera, while constantly whining about her need for clean panties (?). And Cam spends the entire film caked in blood, grime and cheap eye shadow, and rules over the incredible finale, when he gets to go COMPLETELY bonkers! Growling and chewing scenery all the way, he literally tears a house apart, while babbling "Where's the money?" Even point-blank slugs can't slow down the guy! It's an overwrought career highpoint for Mitchell, and that's saying a lot if you're familiar with the guy's extensive filmography... Though competently filmed by director Gustav Gavrin (with help from Albert "HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL" Zugsmith, thus explaining its fine feel for grime), the technique isn't really important with this type of dementia. It's an outrageous chunk of celluloid which stumbles a few times, but is made truly memorable by Cameron and Jayne's hyper-charged presense. —Steve Puchalski

THE AVENGING DISCO GODFATHER (1979). Yes, it's time for Rudy Ray Moore, the last great blaxploitation star. And I use the term "great" not only in popularity, but in girth. Because this guy has slapped his fat butt across grindhouses in pseudo-classics like *DOLEMITE*, *THE HUMAN TORNADO* and *PETEY WHEATSTRAW*, *THE DEVIL'S SON-IN-LAW*. And for this entry, he crosses *GORDON'S WAR* with *CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC* to give us a surrealistically idiotic excursion into the gyrating world of late-'70s disco fever, loaded with an anti-drug message for all the impressionable youngsters in the audience. But ignore all the heavy-handed moralizing, kids, because the main kicks are in seeing Rudy poured into his studded, skin-tight ensemble and playing an ex-cop turned club owner, who spins tunes for the crowded dancefloor while saving his Brothers and Sisters from the evils of Angel Dust! Yes, what we have here is one of those rare anti-PCP films, and though not up to Rudy Ray's other cinematic excursions, it's still a wild trip. Early on, we're treated to a hilarious drug freak-out (complete with skeletons and zombies) and when Rudy gets a gander at all the permanently brain-addled PCP users in the hospital psycho ward (one woman has cooked her baby in the oven, and another thinks he's a caterpillar), the fat guy vows to takes these suckers on (in between long scenes of roller discos, a black version of *The Goldiggers*, and lotsa vapid dancers shakin' their big ol' asses). The fact that Rudy is a humanitarian this time around severely cuts down on his anti-social behavior (i.e. constant womanizing and blue-tongued rhymin'), but his

kung foolery is still wonderously inept—with skills amounting to squinching up his face and hopping about like he needs an economy-sized tube of Preparation H. Hell, the guy makes Fred Williamson look like Laurence Olivier... Though the plot is slow and predictable, the trappings are usually good for a laugh (due in part to the absurd fashion sense of that era). Not to mention some dazzling sidebars, such as an exorcism to rid a PCP victim of her evil spirits! And director J. Robert Wagoner gets big laughs from his jaw-dropping fight choreography, where fists don't even come CLOSE to reaching their targets. Plus no seat in the house will stay dry when Rudy gets dosed by "The Wack" (PCP) and has an unforgettable dimstore psychedelic freakout!...The bottom line? This movie sucks! And the only reason it's watchable at all is due to Rudy's funky presense (and remedial line readings). Even then, it's scraping the bottom of his barrel. —Steve Puchalski

WEIRD AMERICA (1990; Flash Video, Box 410052, San Francisco CA 94141). Charles Gatewood has produced an entire line of videos, each a unique excursion into the underbelly of American life. He takes his camera anywhere that social aberrations occur, and the results are quite entertaining. Besides his entire line of EROTIC TATTOOING AND BODY PIERCING documentaries (made long before either hobby got as trendy), Charles distributes a series of "Weird" videos, during which he tours various cities in search of the coolest hang-outs, bizarrest events, and strangest personalities. Entries include WEIRD MARDI GRAS, WEIRD BIKER WEEK, WEIRD SAN FRANCISCO, and this one, which is cobbled together from all his U.S.-made tapes, and gives us the best overview of our fine, fucked-up country. Accompanied

by the lovely and effervescent "Hurricane" Martha, they hit the road in search of kicks. One of the funniest encounters involves a red-headed dominatrix named Sybil Holliday and her client "Barbie Sue" (a middle-aged guy in a li'l girl's party dress), with Sybil intelligently explaining her profession while demonstrating the proper use of nipple clips. There's the International Miss Leather of 1989 who, though topless and swaddled in leather thongs, lectures about the loss of women's rights in America. In N.Y.C. we get the grimmest edge of mankind, including strip clubs, police brutality, and zoned-out protests. While Daytona Beach provides us with two similar cliques, at opposite ends of the social strata. First up is their annual biker convention, complete with big American-made choppers, fat bearded Jerry Garcia-clones downing Buds and bitching about bikers' rights, and their vapid squeezes, who enjoy shaking their ta-tas at the camera. Then on the other side of the beach it's Spring Break time, with over-privileged college scumbags getting fried and fucked with their parent's Gold Card. But the best cross section of weirdos is in (of course) New Orleans at Mardi Gras, with bikers, transvestites, break dancers, nudists, slaves & their masters, queers, pagans, and plenty of Modern Primitives... This hour long video is continually fascinating, avoiding repetition by never lingering on any one area for too long. Better still, it always keeps a subtle subtext of political awareness, and is much more than just a Mondo freak pagaent. Many of these people are surprisingly articulate (the obvious exception being the braindead Spring Break Fratfucks), with marvelous tales to pass on. This video is a good introduction to Gatewood's oeuvre, and from everything I can tell, it was probably as much fun for him to make as it is for us to watch. —Steve Puchalski

CHARLES GATEWOOD'S **WEIRD AMERICA**



ARCHANGEL (1990). Director Guy Maddin, Winnipeg's answer to David Lynch (albeit early Lynch, before the guy became a satire of himself), is back after his triumphant TALES OF THE GIMLI HOSPITAL. And believe it or don't, his latest endeavor is weirder, more beautiful, and (most importantly) more difficult to endure than the previous fave. Just what I was hoping for, because if this guy ever sells out and begins wasting his unique talent on commercial slop-projects, I'm gonna get really pissed off... The most obvious praise comes from the meticulous (perhaps even obsessive) detail put into every frame of the film. Maddin tries to evoke the flavor of a Russian silent film and succeeds totally. Then he laces his own personal preoccupations

into the story, like sores, pimples, scars, and a serious fascination with death, with sequences veering wildly at any moment from nightmarish humor to grim drama. The result is odd, to say the least, and even though I know the film was made in Canada, I often got the feeling I was watching a movie created on another planet altogether. This snow-encrusted dirge begins when a one-legged soldier saves a young child by brushing him with horse brushes, and is given his father's old wooden leg as a gift ("a perfect fit," he says, trying it on). Set sometime during the Bolshevik Revolution in the town of Archangel, most of the story involves this soldier, the heroic Lt. Boles, seeking out his lost love, Iris. And his romantic entanglements involve another pair of ciphers, Philbin (who continually loses his memory) and Veronkha (who flip flops between the two men). Amidst all the romantic shifts, the plot seems to circle in on itself, and even repeat at times. Confused? I was too. But the script and characters always play second fiddle to the overwhelming sense of atmosphere. Maddin creates a total vision with the lighting, grainy b&w photography, and purposely stilted acting. Along the path there are also many moments of demented humor—both surreal (a trenchful of soldiers under siege by a barrage of rabbits) and morbid (a fat guy using his own intestine to strangle a man). And as a moviegoer you either go along with him (and fall prey to his dreamlike world), or you don't (and simply sit there bored, like most of the stiff I shared the theatre with). There's no in-between on this one. With its cold and downbeat tone, ARCHANGEL is definitely NOT the feel-good film of the year, but it IS brimming with perplexing originality. —Steve Puchalski

THE HELTER SKELTER MURDERS (1970). I know what you're probably thinking: Just what the world needs—another low-budget excursion into the wicked world of Charlie Manson and his pack of creepy crawler flunkies. But this flick is a real find for true crime fans, because though most of the facts of the case are common knowledge nowadays, when this film was first released back in 1970 (right on the heels of the real thing), it must've been a pisser. A perverse little work, both beautifully filmed and constructed. Filmed in stark black and white in order to give the proceedings an almost documentary veneer, the pic almost attains the type of unflinching realism found in classics like THE HONEYMOON KILLERS and IN COLD BLOOD. And it's all the more chilling due to its unhysterical, matter of fact tone, and almost total lack of soundtrack music... The entire project could've easily been lensed for sheer exploitation value (and admittedly, it works on that level), but director Frank Howard strives for much more—utilizing an imaginative structure of flashbacks, while sticking almost verbatim to

the facts and words given as courtroom testimony. The entire twisted cast of characters is here, and we're introduced to Charlie's "Family" from the inside out, using minimal dialogue (thank goodness, since the actors are dreadful) while allowing the images to tell the story of alienated, bored youth finding solace at Charlie's ranch (while injecting enough acid to turn their brainpans into tapioca pudding). We witness their pot smoking, amyl popping, and general hippie debauchery, intercut with testimony from the murder trial years later. And the film takes on an almost surreal quality by the midpoint. When (the never actually named) Sharon Tate takes center stage, the film jarringly shifts into color for a clip from her acting career. And when Charlie mentions Helter Skelter, the audience is treated to a mini-dramatization of Manson's vision of the future—with armed black militants gunning down every whitey in sight and overrunning suburbia. Wow!! Director Howard even incorporates Manson's musical composition, "Mechanical Man", sung by Charlie himself. And nothing is left to the imagination when it comes down to the murder reenactment. It's all captured (thankfully) without too much gratuitous gore, but the attention to the smallest details is so precise that it becomes both ghoulish and engrossing. Strange how this particular film disappeared, but six years later the TV movie *HELTER SKELTER* scored big with the U.S. public. I guess America needed a lot more time before they were able to swallow the truth, and face the type of nightmare this country can breed. Though by no means a perfect film, it is a powerful one, which takes off in unexpected directions and never resorts to heavy handed moralizing. —Steve Puchalski



FUGITIVE GIRLS a.k.a. FIVE LOOSE WOMEN (1971). On the surface this might seem like yet another variation on the Women in Prison genre, but it goes far beyond just that, because this tawdry flesh-fest was directed by sexploitation sleazemeister A.C. Stephen and co-written by none other than Ed Wood Jr., the king of mindblowing incoherence! And that combo makes for deliciously grungy fun!...It begins on the same note as any other Slammer Sluts pic, with a new fish added to the line-up at a minimum security women's work farm. Of course, the girl is innocent (her scummy boyfriend robbed a liquor store with her in the getaway car), but she quickly acclimates herself to working in the fields, taking lotsa showers, and even getting seduced in the middle of the night by a lesbian cellmate ("Don't fake it," she's told. "I know what it's like when a chick is coming," as the woman buries her head into her bare crotch). And wouldn't you know it, the entire group of ladies are planning a mass prison break and the new girl is taken along for the ride. So for most of the film, these gals are on the lam across the countryside (probably because it's a lot cheaper to film outdoors, than to use actual sets), and it becomes a distaff road movie, chock full of vicious vignettes. Not to mention the seemingly-endless, unimaginatively-lensed sex scenes, which are far beyond the limits of any R-rating (although some prints were subsequently cut down in order to get an R). These women are mean, hardened, tough-as-a-two-dollar-steak broads, and the officials chasing them must be blind, stupid, or both—because them and their dogs keeps passing right by without any notice. On their freedom trail, they first encounter a hippie-commune of free-love advocates. But the ladies get pissed off at the crappy organic food and lack of hygiene ("Don't you ever take baths?" they ask the hairballs), so they beat up the guys and hit the road. And their adventures just keep getting more and more idiotically enjoyable. Such as when they pull a guy out of his car, kick him into submission, rape him to the point of exhaustion, and leave him limp by the roadside. Now THERE'S women you can respect! A bunch of motorcycle punks try to attack 'em, and get an en masse chain whipping. The ladies stop at the home of a crippled Vietnam vet and molest his wife while he watches. Best of all, that scraggly ol' codger at the private air strip may look and sound like a Gabby Hayes-impersonator with the D.T.'s,

but it's actually Ed Wood himself! And looking pretty poorly, if I do say so myself...Starring the pneumatic Renee Bond, this is a piss-poor crock of slop which aims low (about groin level) and succeeds totally. Once again proving you can't go wrong if you follow two basic rules and have your female characters continually [1] making love, and/or [2] beating the piss out of some deserving male (of course, ALL males deserve it!). The technical side of the flick is so inept it's not even worth acknowledging, the femme cast doesn't seem to have too many stretch marks (though considering how muddy the photography is, how could you really tell?), and unlike Wood's earlier epics, this flick is NO labor of love—just a quick cashflow to pay off his bar tab with. —Steve Puchalski

PANAMA RED (1976). This hippie dippy California drugfest begins with its credits superimposed over cannabis plants. And from there on, it's all downhill! Possessing all the intellect of a Cheech and Chong movie, but without ANY of the laughs. A film that trivializes, even as it stupefies. Director/writer Robert C. Chinn (whose other claim to 'fame' is directing a bunch of John Holmes porno flicks) is the culprit behind this amateurish tripe, but lead actor Jim Wingert deserves the biggest boot up the ass for contributing the bullshit soundtrack tunes, such as "Have You Made It With the Maid Yet?". It begins like a domestic soap opera, with hairball Randy and his pregnant wife dealing with their penniless homelife, but when a slick drug smuggler arrives on the scene with 1000 kilos of Panama Red, Randy gets involved with dealing out the shipment to all his pothead pals (in shoeboxes full, no less!). Randy's tepid adventures include getting ripped off by black militants, getting it on with a groovy chick (remember free love?), making plans to go to Spain with the profits, and (in the ONLY funny scene) even selling his mother-in-law some of the shit. Meanwhile, the cops (hisssss) are trying to track down the source of this new supply...The entire sorry cast would barely make it as sentient human beings, much less thespians, but the one thing going for the flick is the blatant fact that EVERY character (except the fuzz) nonchalantly tokes up at EVERY possible instant. Not to mention actually INHALES the stuff for once. Quite a difference from today's "say NO to independent thought" attitude. And though I kept wondering if the film would've been any better under the influence of the title weed, I severely doubt it. The pic goes absolutely nowhere, and takes its own sweet time doing it. Even if it does manage to capture a particular lifestyle of the stoned and stupid, it still doesn't make the movie anything more than low budget drivel. At least it has a happy ending, so I wasn't totally pissed off by it. But overall, if I wanna waste my time with a bunch of smoked-up burn-outs, I'd rather go down to Wetlands and sit on a loading dock with the Deadheads. At least I'll get a free buzz out of the ordeal. —Steve Puchalski

STONE COLD (1991). First off, I should tell you that I hate everything that professional butthead Brian Bosworth stands for! That's why I skipped this flick when it played Times Square, and waited for it on video. I simply couldn't bare to spend six bucks to see his smirk filling a movie screen. Well, it turns out I really LOVE this movie! It's the perfect '90s biker movie, and a four-star treat for everyone nostalgic for the good ol' days of THE WILD ANGELS. A no-holds-barred, bikerama shitkicker, featuring a huge cast of souped up motorcycles and drunken idiots riding them. It moves fast, leaves no survivors, and makes all that Van Damme/Steven Seagal crap look tame and lame in comparison. It's also the best actioner yet from director Craig X. Baxley, who's been refining his schlocky skills with first-rate swill like ACTION JACKSON and I COME IN PEACE. And if he can make stiffs like Carl Weathers and Dolph Lundgren look good in his earlier efforts, I guess even Brian Bosworth has a chance... "The Boz" plays a prettyboy undercover cop who infiltrates a vicious gang of drug-running bikers, titled The Brotherhood, and makes friends by promptly kicking everyone's ass. It's the type of movie where the whole cast is so ridiculously macho (including the women), that you'll bust a gut! These are severely sociopathic bikers, who advocate point blank murder and torture (in between six packs) and acting honors have to go to Lance Henriksen (who's getting type cast as a major league sickfuck) as Chains, the leathered and weathered leader of the gang. Pretty soon The National Guard is called in, The Mob makes an appearance, and it ends with a full scale paramilitary takeover of the State Court House, with a body count higher than most Nam flicks. Hey, what more could you want in a mindless action flick? It ladles on the automatic weapons, cheezy strip clubs, vicious rumbles, lightning paced editing, and terrifyingly cool stunts from ex-gag coordinator Baxley. And though the storyline is pretty typical (not to mention, sorely lacking in any subversive politics), it's pumped up by mega-doses of speed and steroids, plus a budget that allows Baxley to cram every frame with more wall-to-wall dirtbags, choppers and artillery than any other bikerama ever made! Co-starring always-added William Forsythe as Chain's psycho right hand man, and Arabella Holzberg as Roach, Lance's red hot biker chick. So, even if you loathe that dickweed "The Boz" as much as I do, put away any preconceptions and catch this one fast! Nothing tops it for gratuitous violence and non-stop action! —Steve Puchalski

FANTASY MISSION FORCE (1984). There's no question that I love Jackie Chan films. Even when they get a little talky in the middle, the spectacular set pieces always keep me blown away. And to put it succinctly, this film is his all-time stoopidest! A supremely silly endeavor that'll leave you numb with disbelief, complete with deliriously dim dubbing (but when a movie is THIS wretchedly bizarre, horrible dubbing can't hurt)...When a quartet of generals (assorted countries, assorted military garb, and with inexplicable names like Abe Lincoln) are kidnapped by the nefarious Japanese, the combined government bigwigs have to hire someone to lead an assault group and get them back. They run through photos of candidates such as Roger Moore as 007, Kurt Russell in ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, even Sly Stallone (their

response: "Rocky...This is a military action...He's not suitable."), and finally agree on a mercenary Captain for hire. The generals are being held captive in Luxembourg (a secret haven for Japanese prisoners of war?), and the Captain spends the first half of the flick running into numerous oddball characters, and recruiting many of them for the mission. Suddenly (everything in this movie happens "suddenly", since it's so choppy edited) we find ourselves in an all-singing/all-dancing/all-drinking beer garden restaurant, which is robbed by some oriental bandits, who're soon enlisted for this crack troupe. And if you think you're puzzled NOW, you haven't met the corrupt cop with the Sherlock Holmes cap and Groucho cigar. Or the bar where the pie-eyed clientele amuse themselves by shooting off a chained-up woman's clothes with revolvers. And then there's some slick lummo, dressed up like China's answer to Wayne Newton, complete with velcro sideburns. Plus here's a good question: What are those (very Asian looking) Scotsmen doing in this movie?...It's at this point in the review that I suggest you give up trying to understand the flick. Just grab a six pack (I'm sure the cast and crew did), and revel in its unflinching silliness...The only important question at hand is, where's Jackie? He's virtually a supporting player, barely in the first half, and it isn't until the middle that he joins up with the ragtag army. But as heroes go, these guys are totally pathetic, because the first time they're attacked (by flying gymnasts in samson threads) most of them are captured, and the rest run away like cowards. They all end up imprisoned by an army of amazons, led by a prissy guy in a tux, and the Force even visits a cool haunted mansion, complete with demonic hands that pass you toilet paper when you're in the john. There's also a great cynical ending (with just about everyone dead) and Jackie saving the day with a smirk and a wiseass remark. Man, all this nonsense gives new meaning to the term Mindless Action! The stunts are less impressive than usual and more comedy oriented (instead of pummeling a fat wrestler into mush, Jackie bites his belly; and 'big laffs' come from a guy getting shot in the ass with arrows). But even if it isn't the best Chan film ever

made, it's certainly the WEIRDEST...But one thing still puzzles me—I'm not sure when this damned movie is supposed to take place! Some people ride horses, others drive new cars, the uniforms range from Civil War wear to World War II, and the weapons include everything from futuristic bazookas to Old West six guns. In other words, ANYTHING they had laying around the studio backlot that morning is on the screen!...And this is obviously from Jackie's early days, since they misspell his name "Jacky". Full of non-stop action and neanderthal charm, FANTASY MISSION FARCE, er, FORCE is an incomprehensible achievement in pure, drunken pleasure. —Steve Puchalski

LIGHT YEARS AWAY (1981) and **IN THE WHITE CITY (1983).** I've gotta hand it to the folks at Lincoln Center. Just when I gave up hope of ever seeing the films of Swiss director Alain Tanner getting a rerelease, these folks come along with a full retro of his career. To be honest, few of his works have ever gotten a decent playoff in this country (his most popular being JONAH WHO WILL BE 25 IN THE YEAR 2000, which isn't exactly on the tip of every moviegoer's tongue), and if they ever did appear, it was usually only for a couple nights at the New York Phlegm Festival. And even fewer are available on video at this moment (due to dickwadded U.S. vid-distributors, who'd rather spew



out the latest bowel movement from Wings Hauser). Well, here are two of his most mystifying endeavors, currently residing in Arthouse Oblivion. Don't expect any high speed car chases though, folks, because Tanner's forte is enigmatic alienation. Not the type of alienation you get while watching a Godard film ("What the fuck is going on? Did the projectionist mix up the reels again?"), but an estranged melancholia which affects only the onscreen characters...**LIGHT YEARS AWAY** is set nominally in the near future, but it might as well be present-day England, with Mick Ford starring as a disaffected street punk, roaming the urban blight with no rhyme or reason. Unable to even hold down a dishwashing job because of his attitude, Mick is enlisted by an eccentric recluse named Poliakov (cantankerously played by Trevor Howard), and heads into the desolate countryside to help "Crazy Pol" out at his garage. Mick isn't exactly sure why he's ditching the city for a wasteland-like existence with a possibly-crazy old man who's been holed up by himself for years, and Trevor doesn't even seem to want the company, but they come to a tenuous partnership. Howard takes Mick under his wing as an apprentice, in exchange for some odd jobs (like manning a gas pump that has no customers, or straightening up a junk yard that has no purpose). And as Mick learns more and more about Poliakov's secret invention, the film takes on a fantastic element and becomes an almost mythic mission. It's certainly a strange, tenuous concoction and the film shambles to a close as only the most obtuse art films can get away with. Though I wouldn't call the end result altogether successful, it's continually fascinating, and long hunks of it are unforgettable. The bleak landscapes consist of junked cars, barren fields and grey skies. The mood suddenly shifts into that of absurdity (at one point Trevor buries himself in the ground for three days in order to heal his wounds, leaving just his head sticking out of the ground). And both characters remain interesting throughout—each lost in a framework of chaos and trying to escape their respective worlds, one way or another. And happily, though Poliakov could've become one of those "irrascible but lovable curmudgins" that I hate with a passion, the character remains mysterious and aloof to the end. It's a haunting, almost uncategorizable tale, barely held down by gravity...On the other hand, **IN THE WHITE CITY** is more typical fare for Tanner. A small gem which is more focused, brooding, and psychological, in its portrait of a man lost in a state of emotional flux. It also provides Bruno Ganz with another chance to dazzle filmgoers' sensibilities. Hell, as far as I'm concerned, Ganz is the most consistently watchable actor in European cinema, from hits like **WINGS OF DESIRE** to more esoteric fare like **KNIFE IN THE HEAD** or **BLACK AND WHITE LIKE DAY AND NIGHT**. He's always perfect as the Introspective Loner. So in other words, he's a natural for an Alain Tanner film. It begins when Ganz jumps off his freighter and takes an impromptu shore leave in Lisbon, equipped with his 8mm camera and a wad of personal problems. Ganz then spends his time sitting in his hotel room, stumbling through the barroom circuit, or taking movies and packaging these diary-like moments off to his estranged wife. Not to mention falling for a lovely young barmaid, who catches his fancy. So if the sight of Bruno washing his feet doesn't sound like pulse-pounding excitement, I'd advise you against this item. Because even though I loved every moment of it, this is the type of work that exists on mood, mystery and the scent of romance alone. With the pensive-to-the-point-of-near-catatonia Ganz trying to find where his head and his heart lies, while losing everything that means anything to him in the process. A tortured loner, living on dead dreams and a bedside bottle. And Tanner's breathtaking imagery and bluesy soundtrack bring it all to life. He incorporates Ganz's grainy home movies into the proceedings; utilizes long, hypnotic takes of the city itself; and continually twists audience expectations—such as his casual approach to a stabbing, which would've become a dramatic highpoint in any other filmmaker's hands. Alain must be some type of magician to pull so much emotion from such fragile ingredients, but he does so masterfully. And depending on your frame of mind and temperament, you'll either be dazzled by the films' ethereal charms, or simply bored out of your friggin' skull. —Steve Puchalski



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MASON REESE?

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MASON REESE? (1990). Direct from the Beg, Borrow or Steal School of Filmmaking, we have an N.Y.U. student project that slipped into the public eye due to its universally remembered subject matter. Director Brett Ratner's 12 minute production is both extremely slick and silly—a mostly fictional/partly factual look at the life and times of Mason Reese, that annoying li'l rugrat who sold Underwood Deviled Ham back in the '70s. Utilizing the largest limo in the East Coast (complete with a jacuzzi), we get shots of the real life Mason (who's looking pretty awful, due to health problems) tooling around New York City with a trio of models frolicking with him in the back seat. Michael Anderson (the dancing dwarf from **TWIN PEAKS**) appears as a lifelong fan of Reese's, who gets to meet his idol when the ego-maniacal Mason visits the sushi restaurant he's employed at, with that chance encounter leading up to a dramatic finale. Besides the jokey little storyline, Ratner incorporates Mason's old commercials, plus a truly pathetic poem Reese read on the old Mike Douglas Show. And for some insane reason Mason's voice has been dubbed by Anthony Michael Hall on helium...The whole endeavor is well crafted, with good use of locations and that immense fuckin' limo. And even the soundtrack is packed with past gems, such as "Boogie Nights", "Shaft" and (how could you forget?) "Short People". Ratner is a first-class salesman too, his video coming complete with its own pressbook and list of festivals and awards. Overall, the movie may be short, but it's quite twisted and winning (not unlike Mason himself). —Steve Puchalski

THE GUYVER (1991). This live action adaptation of the popular Japanese comic character never received a U.S. release. But now that I've seen it, I can understand how U.S. distribution dickwads would be utterly perplexed by the film's awkward combination of science fiction, cheap comedy, and rubber monsters beating the crap out of each other. And

while watching the film, it was obvious that first-time directors Screaming Mad George and Steve Wang were weaned on monster movies when they were kids. The end product is a definite mess, but it's overloaded with cool creature suits and kickass transformation effects. And when it comes to schlocky sci-fi, that's enough to keep me mildly entertained...In the hackneyed introduction, we're given a quick synopsis of the situation (always a bad first sign, since it means they didn't have the budget to film the intro they wanted). You've got humanoid alien beings called Zoanoids, an evil leader called the Zoalord, and an all-powerful weapon which, when worn by a human changes them into a super hero named The Guyver. The nefarious Chronos Corporation is behind all this aliens-taking-over-the-world baloney, and Mark Hamill

(yeah, the guy's still around, though he's looking more and more like Yoda every year) is a C.I.A. agent on their trail. Everybody's after this Guyver device (which looks like an Art Deco hubcap), so of course it's gonna fall into the hands of Sean, an innocent kid (played by the cringingly whitebread Jack Armstrong). This kid accidentally activates the whatzit, and before he knows it, he's been suited with an invulnerable, organic exo-skeleton which makes him look like a first cousin to Ultraman. And from then on, whenever Sean gets upset, this armour wraps around him and changes him into The Guyver. But now that the plot is understood, onto the monsters! For you see, a pack of Zoanoids (led by THE HILLS HAVE EYES' Michael Berryman) is after Sean, and they tend to change into scaly monstrosities at the drop of a head. The special effects are amazing, and the flick is most successful when it's reveling in monster mayhem. Too bad the fun keeping stopping to make way for romantic hooey between Sean and some Oriental chick, or cutesy comic relief (usually from the deadening Jimmy Walker, who portrays a rappin' streetwise henchman of Berryman's). Personally though, the biggest laugh I had was in seeing Mark Hamill turn into a giant cockroach! A lot of B-movie regulars also pop up along the way, including REANIMATOR's Jeffrey Combs and the late David Gale... Maybe it would've helped if the script was more cynical, instead of aiming at a 12-year-old level. Maybe it would've helped to have a lead actor with a personality. Or maybe this is exactly what they were striving for—lotsa neat effects and as much action as they could afford. But if that's the case, I'd suggest you simply rent INFRA-MAN again. —Steve Puchalski

NO SKIN OFF MY ASS

a movie by Bruce LaBruce



"being a fag is a definite plus"

NO SKIN OFF MY ASS (1991). This fine independent feature from Toronto-based director/writer Bruce La Bruce begins with a catchy ditty "Skinhead Guys Turn Me On", and ends up being interesting enough to break out of the gay film festival circuit and reach an even larger audience. Bruce also stars in the film as Sandy who, in a foreshadowing of things to come, is first seen watching the opening scenes of Altman's *THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK*. In that movie, Sandy Dennis plays a lonely spinster who falls for a young dropout she meets in the park one day. Well, La Bruce takes that basic premise and deftly turns it on its queer ear, by making his Sandy a male hairdresser and the pick-up a cute, disaffected punk (expertly played by Klaus von Brucker). Sandy promptly invites his new skinhead friend back to his apartment, offers the perpetually silent guest a bath, and is immediately smitten with his brooding visitor. The two couldn't be more different—Sandy is more on the effeminate, sedate side, with tastes that run to Karen Carpenter's Greatest Hits, while Mr. Skinhead pogos around the pad to hilarious hardcore covers of "Have You Ever Been Mellow?" and "These Boots Are Made For Walking", wearing nothing but a towel and Nam boots. La Bruce introduces several great characters along the way, including the Skinhead's sister, an underground political lesbian filmmaker who gets to lash out with some cutting remarks about the pairing. And he also weaves in a few wild dream sequences to give the ultra-grainy b&w work a dash of Fassbinder-esque surrealism (such as a little leather sadism to "Deutschland Uber Alles", and assorted homoerotic fantasies)... If you can make it through the copious male nudity, genitalia close-ups, hardcore gay sex, and even a nipple piercing, you'll find a witty, touching tale of lust turning to love against all odds. And the happiest surprise is that Bruce never allows the story to wallow in angst, as you might expect. Though extremely crude at times and hampered by dubious sound looping, Bruce coaxes fine performances out of the entire cast. Then ices it with a great assortment of background music, from Tiny Tim and Nico, to The Subhumans' "Slave To My Dick". —Steve Puchalski

GANG OF SOULS (1989). This hour long document is filled with a potpourri of incredible personalities and commentary. It's an attempt to pull together a cross section of the great Beat writers, in addition to the literary offspring of their seedlings, then give them a chance to speak out on a number of topics. And with the likes of William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Diane diPrima, Allen Ginsberg, Ed Sanders, and John Giorno participating in this video project, it's bound to be crammed with wonderful anecdotes. On the other hand, since a gathering of these hoary characters can sometimes seem like vets swapping old, too-often-repeated war stories, the filmmakers include the new generation of Beat writers, such as Jim Carroll, Richard Hell, and Henry Rollins, who inject a little fresh anarchy into the proceedings. Each participant sits alone in front of a white backdrop, the camera kept to a static head shot, with their commentary edited into snippets and filed under various vague categories. They speak about the birth of the Beats; the nature of poetry ("like dropping a rose petal into the Grand Canyon," Richard Hell likens it to); religion/drugs; et cetera. Unfortunately, the stream of consciousness editing style is so annoyingly rapid fire and sound-bite influenced, that you aren't always given the chance to savor the speakers' words... It's wonderful to see the different generations and their similarities, despite the decades difference. And the only truly annoying presense in the whole thing is that of Lydia Lunch, who's so smugly self-righteous about her "atrocities" that you wanna muzzle her (a good example of her pompous attitude is when they ask the writers who their influences were—Ginsberg names the Romantic Poets, and Lydia says Hitler)... Despite its fragmented style, this is essential viewing for people interested in the state of American prose. It never digs very deep (how could it in only one hour?), but the observations are spot on. Best of all is Henry Rollins' tirade against people who claim to be writers, but always have an excuse why they aren't doing it: "You wanna write? SHUT UP AND WRITE!" —Steve Puchalski

LORD LOVE A DUCK (1966). This is one of the many films that gave Tuesday Weld the rep of being one of the coolest young actresses of the '60s, conveying an intelligence that others could never come close to, while maintaining the sex kitten mystique. She's a dish, all right, and if not, this entire film would've fallen apart, because her character is such a pouty bitch that you need an actress as likable as Tuesday or else you'd want to kick all her teeth down her pretty little throat. Directed and written by George Axelrod, this razor-edged satire on teenage rebellion and California lifestyle is told with a fragmented structure. It begins with male lead Roddy McDowall (playing the oldest high schooler in film history, since he was 38 years old at the time) bulldozing his graduation bandstand, locking himself in the administration building, while quacking wildly. The remainder of the film is told in flashback from a psycho ward, as McDowall (playing Alan Mollymauk) shares his tale of Barbara Ann Greene (Weld) and his affliction, er, affection for her. Set at the high tech Consolidated High School, Barbara Ann is the typical

head cheerleader-type, a gorgeous, blond, utterly vapid party girl who whines "everybody's got to love me". Roddy is the school's rebellious genius, who promises to get her anything she wants and Barbara Ann takes full advantage of his offer to combine his brains and her body. When she wants to join the school's Cashmere Sweater Club, Mollymauk shows her how to convince her divorced dad to buy her 13 sweaters (and Tuesday is WAY too seductive trying them on for him). When Tuesday begins failing "Plant Skills" (a.k.a. Botany), she cons the principal into a passing grade. And when she meets the dopey man of her dreams, Roddy even gets him for her. Clearly the Einstein of human manipulation, Mollymauk loves playing people like pawns, and on the surface, both of the leads would seem completely unlikable. But Roddy's wiseass veneer covers a vulnerability of being under Weld's spell, and only Tuesday could play such a selfish brat, yet seem so utterly desirable. The supporting cast of characters is more cynically drawn than you'd expect too, such as Tuesday's beer-guzzling cocktail waitress mom, and Ruth Gordon as her no-nonsense mother-in-law (before she became that cloying post-HAROLD AND MAUDE hag)... There are also several severely subversive laughs and jabs at then-modern culture crammed into the sidelines, such as the First Drive-In Church of Southern California, or a sudden plunge into beach movie mania when they link up with the producer of *THE THING THAT ATE BIKINI BEACH*. The film may not be consistent, but it certainly is surprising, with a moment of absurdity suddenly shifting gears into unexpectedly heavy drama. It's no wonder '60s audiences didn't know what to make of it. The movie's darker subtexts turned off viewers who expected a wacky youth film, yet it's still crammed with cheap sight gags and Axelrod's ever-leering camera. In respect to its razored satire, the film bares similarities to *THE LOVED ONE* (though *DUCK* isn't nearly as successful), and its hilarious high school cruelty even brings to mind an early variation of *HEATHERS*. —Steve Puchalski

CUL-DE-SAC (1966). The core concept is pretty routine. A pair of hoodlums (Lionel Stander and Jack MacGowran) nonchalantly invade the isolated home of Donald Pleasance and his pretty young wife, who originally moved there in order to get away from civilization, but instead wind up facing the worst aspect of it. Sure, it sounds like stereotypical thriller material, but in the hands of a young Roman Polanski (before he turned into an aging enfant terrible), it becomes a sardonic tale filled with pitch black humor and acidic characters. And like Polanski's best work (*REPULSION*, *THE TENANT*), the entire thing is so bleak and claustrophobic and paranoid and nihilistic that all you can do is laugh at the onscreen chaos. Plus Pleasance is the lucky recipient of most of the abuse—in fact, when the criminals first arrive, Pleasance and the Mrs. are in the midst of a sexual game, and Donald has to spend the beginning of the movie absurdly dressed in his wife's negligee and eye make-up. Stander is a gravel-voiced, confident thug; MacGowran is his frail, snivelling, greasy-haired partner; Françoise Dorléac is a mod young thing proficient at mindgames; and though Pleasance likes to shoot his mouth off, he's essentially a coward. In other words, it's a motley cast of unlikable shits, all colliding with each other in a whirl of violence, sadism and sexual tension. There isn't much of a plot, mostly just Stander cooling his heels and waiting for accomplices to pick him up, while tormenting the couple. And whether they're getting soused around a beachside grave, dealing with a surprise visit by a pack of boorish acquaintances (with Stander hilariously taking the guise of Pleasance's butler), or playing practical jokes (such as setting Stander's feet on fire while he sleeps), Polanski keeps the film tough, tense, and perversely comic. By the end of their encounter, milquetoast Pleasance is nearly driven insane, and it all explodes in a downbeat, brutal (and thoroughly perfect) finale! With lush black and white photography backing up the wonderful ensemble, *CUL-DE-SAC* may seem slight to '90s audiences expecting *Big Mindless Thrills*, but its success is in keeping the viewer continually off-balance... A young Jacqueline Bisset pops up as one of the visitors, without leaving much of an impression. —Steve Puchalski

THE OCCULT EXPERIENCE (1985). Shot by the Australian Film Commission and (barely) released on video, this is an informative documentary on the modern world of the occult. And though you might think this is going to be just another Mondo-style peek into crackpotdom, director Frank Heimans strives for more than that. He respects these fringe religions, and takes the entire endeavor dead serious. Perhaps a little too serious, you realize, once you meet a few of these nuts... Beginning with a quick overview of tribal history, the film cuts right to the supernatural shenanigans in the western world. We meet New Yorkers celebrating a pagan mass in the middle of a Manhattan street, editors of *The Satanic Newsletter* (circulation: a whopping 75!) from the Temple of Set, members of the Fellowship of Isis, plus a wide assortment of witches and warlocks—usually of the white magic variety, who roam around the woods babbling about the powers of the earth and looking like they escaped from some Deadhead comic book convention... A few bits are fantastic! For example, there's old footage of Anton LaVey and one of his female alters from the '68 flick *SATANIS*; a brief history of Australia's infamous Rosaleen Harris, a witch who headlined the tabloids in the '50s; and an interview with fave illustrator H.R. Giger, who gives us a tour of his twisted studio. Then, on the other hand, even more moments are simply laughable. We're told that the occult "teaches men and women to be themselves," when in fact a lot of it seems like an excuse for geeky nerds to hang out with nude, gullible young women. And the funniest segment is when a guy is initiated into witchdom by being blindfolded, having his hands tied, stripped naked, and left in the woods. I can't help but laugh at their loopy self-seriousness, the same way I laugh at all that Christian dogma-nure. And speaking of that highly-overrated Jesus dude, the film even gives us a glimpse of his toadies conducting an exorcism!... I do have to commend the filmmakers for weeding their way into these private rituals, but most of the people involved in the supernatural don't seem to have a lick of charisma (obvious exceptions being LaVey and Crowley), and thus come off as half-baked, blustery sods who embrace their religion because they've got nothing else going for 'em. I really wanted to embrace this film, but instead it mostly left me cold. —Steve Puchalski



THEODORE MELBRIDGE: THE SILENT GENIUS (1990). As far as I know, this half-hour short has never really been shown to the public. Too bad, because directors John McIntyre and John Moynihan have come up with a consistently clever and often close-to-brilliant work, which looks back on the career of turn-of-the-century film pioneer Theodore Melbridge. Beginning with his early years and tragic childhood (his entire immigrant family dying in a butter mill explosion), through clips from lost silent pics such as *THE MAN WITH THE LARGEST BRAIN*, we trace the rise and fall of this almost-forgotten visionary...Of course, the point of this whole film (if you didn't figure it out yourself), is the fact that there was NO SUCH PERSON as Theodore Melbridge, and that's what makes this mockumentary so endearingly comic. McIntyre & Moynihan ably pull off this loving parody of a PBS-style retrospect, and their b&w film clips are so meticulously crafted and artificially aged (complete with the essential overwrought acting and overboard make-up) that it's difficult to tell the entire thing is faked. The viewer is taken through Melbridge's fluffy comedies, including the Kid Cole series, about a happy-go-lucky coal miner; his at-that-time shockingly lewd *SHEIK OF THE DESERT SAND*; and even a glimpse of his infamous mega-epic *THE HISTORY OF ART*, which was to take us from the beginning of time to the cubists (unfortunately, Melbridge spent his entire budget on the opening scene of the destruction of Atlantis, and the film was never finished). Also included are interviews with film historians and plenty of studious narration, and except for a couple moments when the humor gets a bit obvious, I bet most people would never figure out that it's all a savvy put-on. It's the *SPINAL TAP* of silent filmmaker documentaries. —Steve Puchalski

THE SORCERERS (1967). Britisher Michael Reeves only directed three films before his untimely death. The best known (because of its accessibility on video) is *THE CONQUEROR WORM* (a.k.a. *WITCHFINDER GENERAL*). But his little seen *THE SORCERERS* is nearly as fascinating. I first caught it in my pre-teens on late night TV, loved it back then, and still think it holds up well. Plus it gave 70-year-old Boris Karloff (who signed onto some solid stinkers in his waning years) his best role in many moons, and it's nice to see him in a flick that doesn't make you feel sorry for the ol' guy...Once again, we're confronted with scientific advances misused by us dumb humans. Boris stars as Dr. Monserrat who, with his wife, has created a hypnotic device which will connect their own consciousness into the body of any subject. And through this device they can vicariously enjoy someone else's adventures while sitting in the comfort of their own musty apartment. Groovy London hipster Ian Ogilvy volunteers for the experiment, never being told the full implications of the job, and pretty soon Karloff and the Mrs. are feeling all his sensations—such as motorcycle racing and swimming. But while Boris wants to use his invention for the good of senior citizens everywhere, his domineering wife becomes addicted to the thrill of her newfound lease on life, and she even begins subliminally controlling Ogilvy's actions. The rightfully-confused Ian suddenly ditches his friends, hits some swinging London clubs, begins picking up loose ladies, and eventually is even forced into the world of crime (that is, if you consider killing Susan George a crime)...This is an intelligent, intriguing concept of mind control gone awry, with Reeves taking the psychological path over the graphic one, but the pic is consistently hampered by its severely strained budget and tendency toward long-windedness. Luckily, Karloff gives the production a kick of class, and Catherine Lacey (who has bags under her eyes big enough to carry groceries home in) is a real bitch, even to the point of whacking Boris out cold when she doesn't get her way. Definitely worth searching out. —Steve Puchalski

JACOB TWO-TWO MEETS THE HOODED FANG (1977). Ever wonder whatever became of Theodore Flicker, the man who gave us *THE PRESIDENT'S ANALYST*? (Not exactly a question that pops up every day, I'll admit.) In this instance, he adapted Mordecai Richler's twisted Canuck children's book into a fairly demented flick for the kiddies. And budgeted with pocket change, it makes most Afterschool Specials look like *APOCALYPSE NOW*. In other hands, the result would've been a cringable saccharin-overdose, but Flicker's warped sensibilities keep rising to the surface like a bloated carcass, and this terrifying mess is reminiscent of (but nowhere near as incredible as) the classic 5,000 *FINGER OF DR. T*. Jacob Two-Two (thus nicknamed because he repeats everything twice—because Adults don't listen to him the first time) is a thoroughly charm-barren little boy who goes against his father's orders by crossing the street and finds himself in a fantasy world that's a cross between *H.R. PUFF'N' STUFF* and Bosch. Jacob is immediately on trial for "Insulting an Adult", sent to a dungeon populated by colorful mutant jailers, and pisses off the child-hating warden/wrestler The Hooded Fang (Alex Karras). He also gets the treat of a cold shower (in an ice box, no less), before being put to hard labor, shoveling coal in the Smogworks with all the other imprisoned children (who are literally grey from lack of sunlight). There are some wonderfully cruel concepts here, but unfortunately they're diluted by Cat Stevens-esque tunes that'll tighten your sphincter; production values of an elementary school Xmas pageant; and a creeping sentimentality that takes over by the conclusion (when a pair of snot-nosed Child Power superkids inexplicably save everyone). Phooey!... The best part is the fantasy world though—so prepare to grit your teeth through the beginning (or just use the first 20 minutes to get properly liquored up), because the pic gets stranger as it moves along. Karras roams about in his wrestling mask and royal robes, mugging for the camera and doing his finest Bullwinkle impression; The Slime Squad, who patrol the corridors, look like giant used condoms; all the adults are utter buffoons or sadistic monsters; and there's just enough weirdness to give impressionable tykes nightmares for days. You can't ask for more in a kids' film, can you? —Steve Puchalski

EVIL TOONS (1991). Another quickie from director Fred Olen Ray, the churn-'em-out creator of such great titles/flaccid flicks as *HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS* and *BEVERLY HILLS VAMP*. Hell, the guy must crank out at least a couple films a year. It seems like every few months another cheapie with his name on it hits the video racks, usually employing some semi-name star and a bevy of scream queen babes. In this case he signed on a bloodshot David Carradine, who gets top billing, even though he's only in a handful of scenes. And cult fave Dick Miller gets second billing for only an afternoon's work. Well, at least Fred's films have a self-awareness of just how cheezy



they are—that all his scenes are first take and all his actresses are usually hired for their mammaries rather than their method acting. But even though none of his work will ever win any awards, at least I've never gotten pissed off at a Fred Olen Ray movie, because Fred always gives you just what you expect—mindless exploitation laced with cheap humor...For this excursion into lungwartland we're introduced to three college bimbos (including porn star Madison) and their brainy girlfriend Megan (sexpot Monique Gabrielle, sporting glasses to make her look intelligent), who're hired to clean out a haunted mansion. Of course, trouble begins when nearly-catatonic Carradine appears at their doorstep and hands them a gnarled old book. (Scary? Nope.) The twist on the story is that instead of the book conjuring up some demon in a crummy rubber monster suit, Fred pulls a Z-grade ROGER RABBIT by giving us a cell-animation monster (design courtesy of Chas Balun)—mixing live action T&A with a horny cartoon creature whose eyes pop out and tongue wags whenever one of the ladies bounces past. The print ads focus on the animation, but there's actually only a few minutes in the whole film (and it's pretty cheaply done too). I guess we're supposed to be amused by the damsels' incompetency in the face of danger. (I wasn't.) And I guess we're supposed to laugh at the demon's idiot wisecracks. (I didn't.) And I guess we're supposed to rent this video in hopes it'll be worth our cash. (I'd wait until it's on cable at 2 a.m.). It's simply substandard supernatural sexploitation. Featuring cameos by Ray-regular Michelle Bauer as Dick Miller's horny wife and Arty Johnson, who's actually starting to look like that ol' parkbench codger he used to play in LAUGH-IN. —Steve Puchalski



THE LONERS (1972). Dean Stockwell is (unfortunately) best known to the media-fed masses for his weekly-paycheck role in QUANTUM LEAP, but I'd prefer to remember the guy for his counterculture roots—from PSYCH-OUT and Neil Young's HUMAN HIGHWAY, to THE WEREWOLF OF WASHINGTON and (of course) BLUE VELVET. Well, this particular film is one of his most obscure—and rightly so. It's a biker flick filmed at the end of that era, when every two-bit, fly-by-night studio had already churned out a chopper drama and tossed it onto a triple bill for a weekend. All they needed was a camera, a few cycles, and a grubby cast of cretins (in many cases, the script was optional). In this instance, the cretins are headed by none other than a bandana-ed Dean Stockwell (looking mighty nervous astride his chopper). Dean stars as a hippie/biker, whose entire day is ruined when he accidentally offs a couple cops, and has to flee into the desert, accompanied by his dopey best friend and a thrill-happy suburban belle (Pat Stich, who shacks up with Dean so quickly you'd think she'd poured Spanish Fly on her Corn Flakes that morning). In other words, there ain't a whole lot of originality here, folks. And our lawless little band is easily the least threatening assortment of bikers I've ever seen. The Amish are more terrifying than this anemic trio! They aren't exactly the swiftest lot either, coming off only slightly brighter than the redneck locals they have to contend with. But though it might falter in the Action and Thrills Department, the film maintains a bit of hippieish charm. Stockwell et al look exceptionally far out, the camerawork is crude yet weird (reaching for trippy, Zsigmond-esque compositions), and it's packed with unintentional laughs. The film is best when it strays furthest from the biker clichés, such as when Dean and Pat steal some square threads and infiltrate a country club. And the finale gets nastier and more nihilistic than you'd expect, trying for some Heavy Statements (à la EASY RIDER), but instead falling flat on its groovy, tormented face. Directed by Sutton Roley (yeah, I know—WHO?), and featuring a surprise overwrought appearance by Gloria Grahame, as Stich's bitchy suburban mom (the type who finds one joint in her daughter's room and starts ranting that she's a "junkie"). —Steve Puchalski

THE HUNTING PARTY (1971). Here's a sleazy little vehicle chock full of stars who're probably embarrassed to death about ever signing onto it—with the possible exception of Oliver Reed, who's been known to do just about anything on (or for that matter, off) camera. It's an Italian-lensed western (backed by MGM), starring soon-to-be Oscar winner Gene Hackman and soon-to-be sitcom whore Candice Bergen. And when the very first sequence is an intercutting of (1) a dead horse getting carved up, while (2) Candice is getting painfully fucked by hubbie Hackman, you know this isn't gonna be playing the Disney Channel anytime this century...A relatively big-budget attempt to cash in on the mondo western mini-craze (swill like HOT SPUR, FIVE BLOODY GRAVES, et cetera), it succeeds in being a genuinely hateful film filled with despicable, repellent characters. And we get to spend 108 minutes with 'em (ain't we lucky?). The "fun" begins when Hackman leaves town for a couple days of sport, complete with his train car bordello, and villainous Oliver Reed kidnaps Candice. Well, since Hackman is the type of sadist who enjoys putting out his cigars on whores' bare butts, he decides to set up his own hunting party, and track Reed down like an animal. But we soon learn that while all of Reed's scummy crew wants a piece of Candice's boney ass, Reed's plan is to have Bergen teach him to read (yeah, right). So while Candice is teaching Oliver the alphabet (after two lessons, the moron's up to the letter 'D'), Hackman is methodically knocking off the bad guys with high powered rifles...This is pure, nihilistic rotgut, packed with macho idiocy taken to the Nth degree. There's a complete lack of suspense, originality, or logic, and the only thing that keeps you watching are the couple good massacres and a curiosity about how much trashier the thing can get...Hackman barrels his way through the movie as a character so ornery he'll shoot a guy in the back while he's taking a dump; Candice's entire role amounts to that of chattel (and when she starts to fall in love with Reed, she sets Womens' Lib back a thousand years); and as for Reed—what the hell this obviously British cowboy was doing in the Old West, I still can't figure out. The entire production crew consists of Pastaland personnel, and hack director Don Medford tries his best to be a Peckinpah-clone. But all they can muster is an occasionally nasty cliché-fest in chaps. —Steve Puchalski

MAXIM XUL (1990). How could I resist any new horror film featuring Adam West? Yep, Adam's still in front of the camera, and producers are still splashing his face on video boxes in order to cash in on his 25+ year old fame from BATMAN. At least West has more than a shred of dignity left after his three year run as the love-handed Caped Crusader (well, if you forget about that utterly pathetic Saturday morning Batman show he wheezed through in the early '70s)...Hey, did anyone else catch that Batman reunion a few years ago on the (happily defunct) Late Show with Ross Shafer? West was the only one with a modicum of braincells remaining. Burt Ward was so puffed up he looked like he was having some type of allergic reaction, while pathetically babbling about a youth camp he was running; Julie Newmar looked like a guinea pig in some wrongheaded plastic surgery experiment, her skin pulled tighter than a timpani's; and Frank Gorshin couldn't stop cackling, after spending his residuals from THE COPYCATS on a lifetime supply of Night Train. But good ol' Adam West is still definitely cool. And for this monster romp Adam grew a goatee to play Professor Marduk, an expert in supernatural hokum. Sadly, West brings the only element of class to this substandard creature feature, which is heavy on melodrama, low on mayhem. Not exactly the correct combo to please anyone in search of dime-store thrills. The two lead characters are straight out of any TV show—there's the tough-as-nails (yet sensitive) male detective and the beautiful (but professional) female reporter, and West pops up (all too infrequently) to fill in the answers about a rash of ultra-brutal killings around town, performed by a demonic monster who sucks out people's soul. For over an hour we're dragged through a few lame red herrings, a little tedious romance, and a shitload of solid boredom, only to be rescued at the very end when Adam finally takes center stage with a trusty sword and mace, in an effort to decapitate this Maxim Xul (a.k.a. The Ultimate Evil)... You know a film's in serious danger when Adam West blows away the rest of the cast with his acting prowess. The guy plays it dead straight, and his character would probably make a fair TV series—it couldn't be worse than syndicated crap like THE NEW TARZAN or STREET JUSTICE. The rest of the cast is unremarkable, as is Arthur Egeli's direction (don't give up that day job at White Castle yet, Art!), and even the monster costume looks like a reject from the old NIGHT STALKER series. **Lame.** —Steve Puchalski

SATAN'S BREW [Satansbraten] (1976). One German journalist labelled this film "an act of hatred of the human race", and it was also one of the few films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder to be universally trashed. So of course I'm gonna search it out! No arguing it's a difficult film, and often not even a very good one, but there's something disturbingly compelling about this absurdist black comedy, its cast of unlikable boobs, and overall obsession with murder and masochism. Fassbinder regular Kurt Raab (CHINESE ROULETTE, BEWARE OF A HOLY WHORE) stars in the pivotal role of Walter, a fatuous (though incredibly egotistical) writer suffering through a creative block. And his hellish household consists of a bloated, shrewish wife; a fly-collecting lump of a brother; and a crazy female admirer who thinks she's Walter's REAL wife. In addition, the police keep visiting as part of their investigation of a murder (which Walter committed). Now all of this could've been handled quite well with a realistic edge, but Fassbinder decides to follow his belief that "in madness there is true genius". And he certainly puts his ensemble through the grinder, including Ulli Lommel, Volker Spengler and Margit Carstensen (who's unrecognizable beneath all her 'homely' make-up). Not only do they constantly bicker and whine amongst each other, but Rainer even makes sure they're physically repulsive, by giving 'em warts, bad teeth and coke bottle glasses. Then his "house full of cretins" is left to deal with spankings, voyeurism, food spitting, and rampant stupidity...When Walter finally gets some inspiration, he's accused of plagiarism, but by then he's so screwed up that there's no going back. He demands to be worshipped, breaks into spontaneous lectures in the middle of restaurants, steals admirers' savings in order to subsidize his own existence, and constantly reiterates how "sensitive" he is in comparison to the "sub-human" public. It's a scathing portrait of the Artist as Pompous Lunatic, with Fassbinder holding a funhouse mirror up to his own notorious reputation for manipulation and tantrums. Yet somehow, despite death, beatings and disillusionment, Rainer manages to end it all on a note of optimistic farce, with insanity triumphing over pretentiousness...SATAN'S BREW may not be Fassbinder's bleakest work, but it's certainly one of his most indulgent (with the exception of the last, dazzling two hours of BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ). And knowing his sadistic streak, I bet the guy got more enjoyment out of twisting his actors into these cartoonish buffoons, than the viewer gets out of watching 'em. —S. Puchalski

I BURY THE LIVING (1958). This is a fine horror film which relies as much on suspense as it does on shock. A perfect B-movie with a great gimmick, swift execution and creepy goings-on. Richard Boone (remember HEC RAMSEY? How about HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL?) stars as the new superintendent of the Immortal Hills cemetery. And he quickly discovers he has a supernatural link to the huge gravesite map on his office wall. You see, the map is covered with black and white pins—a black pin signifying the grave is occupied, and a white one meaning the owner is still alive and kicking. Well, that is until Boone accidentally sticks a black pin where a white one should be, and (wouldn't you know it) the newlywed couple who own the plot both die that evening. Just to prove to himself that it was just a "coincidence", Boone tries it again, and again, with the same deadly results. Before long Boone becomes a complete nervous wreck. He even tries his best (without success) to convince skeptical reporters and the police that he has an unearthly power over life and death—in the process killing off most of his business associates, who begin dropping dead like cockroaches at a Combat convention. The plot takes off in strange directions, and even if the surprise ending is implausible, it's packed with ghoulsh moments. Plus it helps that Boone is a REAL actor (a switch for this type of fodder), and he maintains audience sympathy, even when he's going bonkers. Director Albert Band keeps the proceedings tense, and in the nicest surprise, visual designer E. Vorkapich manages to cram in some stunningly trippy images as Boone begins hallucinating while staring at that damned map (and you know I'm a sucker for that type of thing). Overall, a solid '50s horror flick which belies its low budget by maintaining a modicum of intelligence. —Steve Puchalski



GOKE, THE BODY SNATCHER FROM HELL (1969). More high weirdness from Japan. This is a crazy quilt which mixes disaster movies, sci-fi slop, and gory effects. Imagine the clichés of an old Irwin Allen movie, then triple the hysteria level, and populate it with high-dB-dubbed oriental actors portraying folks with I.Q.'s slightly higher than a dish of bean dip. The story begins on a commercial airliner loaded with a ludicrous cross-section of passengers—a psychiatrist, an Anglo military widow, a repulsive politician (is there any other kind?), an assassin, a terrorist with a bomb, et cetera. But when the plane crashes in the middle of nowhere, it's the survivors who turn out to be the unlucky ones, especially when the glowing UFO arrives and the aliens begin taking over their bodies. Yikes! Once again, we're up against spacemen wanting to take over our miserable little planet (proving what shitty taste they must have). The assassin is the first to get sucked into the alien ship, and the invaders turn out to be pulsating blobs. They split open the guy's forehead (nice vaginal image there), and the ooze-creatures slither slug-like through the crack and into his brain, turning him into a flesh-chewing zombie. Ol' Cleft-Head soon begins knocking off the other humans one by one, chewing on their necks, vampire-style, or using a guy's head as a makeshift Playdoh Factory. Director Hajime Sato must've been brain-damaged to come up with this nonsense, because none of it makes a lick of sense, and that's one reason I loved it so. In addition to all the surprisingly disgusting bits, the photography is drenched with rich colors and surreal hues fill the skies. Plus, all the characters are so high strung it's hilarious, while the dweebo psychiatrist keeps commenting on their erratic behavior (I imagine I'd be erratic too, if goopy aliens were crawling into my head). And if you expect an upbeat ending, FORGET IT! We're all fucking doomed, folks!...Such drama! Such horror! Such Bonzai bullshit! Even when the flick loses momentum after awhile, its endless supply of hot air keeps it aloft. It's an overwrought laff-riot! —Steve Puchalski



THE GIANT CLAW (1957). I wonder if producer Sam Katzman realized that he was creating one of the most unforgettable laff-riots of the '50s when he tossed his greenbacks into this schlocky tale. On the surface, it's a competent little B-movie, but it just happens to feature one of THE hokiest creatures of all time! I personally LOVE giant monsters, but this has to be one of the lamest I've witnessed in a LONG TIME! Sooooo bad, it's hilarious!...It's a standard set-up. An arctic government base (complete with The Cocky Pilot, The Beautiful Assistant and all the other dusty stereotypes) goes on alert when a UFO the size of a battleship is sighted. Soon flights are disappearing, questions mount, and superstitious rumor of the "Cakanya" (a flying demon) become prevalent. It's your average lading of sci-fi silliness, but just wait until the monster appears. It's UNBELIEVABLE!! A rubbery, fur-trimmed puppet which is one of the most artificial creatures ever to grace a movie screen (with the notable exception of George Hamilton). The Air Force's weapons have no effect on this "overgrown buzzard"—it just plucks the mediocre miniatures out of the air with its plastic claws, gleefully crushing the planes and swallowing the parachuting pilots. Sorta like being eaten by a rabid Big Bird with a pituitary problem. Obviously what the filmmakers wanted was something more frightening than Godzilla. Instead they ended up with a third cousin to Howdy Doody. And while the world's population panics over the creature's "orgy of destruction" (thanks to plenty of stock footage), the world's brainiest scientists somehow conclude the monster is protected by an anti-matter energy screen and comes from outer space. How do they know all this shit? Because "no other explanation is possible", explains Dr. Dimwit. And why is it bothering all these earthlings? Maybe it's trying

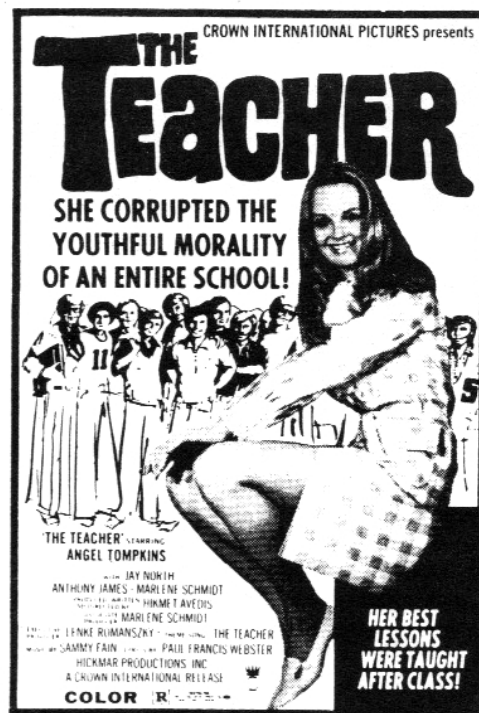
to build a nest? Lay some eggs? Host the Audubon Society annual banquet? I loved the scene when a hot rod full of obnoxious teens gets plucked by The Claw, and when it sits on top of the U.N. Building, chewing on the top floors. But what an anti-climax! It looks like someone dumped a dead pigeon into a wading pool. PLOP!...Jeff Morrow (THIS ISLAND EARTH, KRONOS) stars as the greasy-scalped pilot with a fondness for broads, booze and bad script choices; and Mara Corday doffed more than her dignity the following year as Playboy's Miss October...Jaw-dropping fun. --Steve Puchalski

IMMORAL TALES [Contes Immoraux] (1975). The name of Polish director Walerian Borowczyk is virtually unknown in the States. But in films such as THE BEAST, THE STORY OF SIN and BEHIND CONVENT WALLS he's dealt bluntly with such topics as prostitution, bestiality, and religious carnality. This is probably his best known work (which isn't saying much), though it never got the distribution it deserved due to its X-rating. Not for anything hardcore in the least, mind you, but for its constant, undiluted eroticism. It consists of four short vignettes, all focusing on a different aspect of sexuality, with Borowczyk seducing the viewer with his feast of aberrant behavior and arthouse veneer...The first tale, "The Tide", gives us that perennial of Euro-trash cinema, jailbait sex. Set at a very photogenic seaside, a boy and girl (conveniently enough, cousins—yet another staple of the genre) frolic about the rocks, while the camera takes long, loving shots of the teenaged flesh. He finally convinces her to give him a blowjob by explaining that in doing so, she'll learn the movement of "the tides". (And the chick falls for it.) It's all exceptionally erotic, with stylish use of the breaking surf and tactile imagery. But there's really no point to it all either, except as an excuse to linger on this underage babe...But the others, based upon historical tales, prove Walerian's directorial finesse and range. In "Therese the Philosopher", a teenaged girl (hmmm, I guess Walerian likes 'em young) is locked in a room as punishment, and while exploring the place, she also conveniently explores her own sexuality. After discovering a book of dirty woodblock prints, she lays on the bed in a see-thru nightie and talks to Jesus while masturbating with a zucchini. After a while it's difficult to tell where her religious revelation ends and the first orgasm begins...Paloma Picasso (Pablo's daughter) stars as the infamous title character in "Countess Erzsebet Bathony", a 17th century Hungarian royale who rides around rural villages, rounds up local virgins, and takes them home for a mass shower and

inspection. The segment is a mood-drenched, almost paganistic build-up of passion, to the point where the ecstasy of sex merges with that of death, when the Countess makes a cleansing use of the virgins' gifts... And lastly, we're presented with that goodtime gal, Lucrecia Borgia, who's visiting her dad, Pope Alexander VI, while the priest Savonarola is condemning the Church's rampant debauchery. And Borowczyk gets a chance to lighten up for this finale, by combining the look of Robert Bresson with the switchblade satire of Ken Russell. As Savonarola rails from his pulpit, The Pope takes Lucrecia on a tour of the Vatican—from perusing a few pornographic etchings of horses and a little paternal fondling, to some selective tickling and the nude Lucrecia trying on the holy vestments... As you can tell from the synopses, Borowczyk loves to take human sexuality to its most daring and fetishistic limits, while showing how repression can backfire. And though the subject matter is ripe for a schlocky, softcore approach, Walerian always pulls back before it slips into exploitation, and the end product has all the appeal to the Rain Coat Contingent as Peter Greenaway's present-day antics do. On a technical note, each segment is filled with sumptuous camerawork and period detail, with textures and compositions beyond the norm. In fact, a couple of the segments are virtually wordless, and rely entirely on Borowczyk's eye. But the real revelation in the viewing is the fact that Walerian focuses on the female edge of eroticism. It's a refreshing attitude, having a woman's passion guiding each tale, and Borowczyk turns every episode into a fascinating, dreamlike excursion into unorthodox desires. It's a wonderful film. —Steve Puchalski

I WAS A TEENAGE MUMMY (1991; Ghost Limb Films, P.O. Box 3066, Hoboken, NJ 07030). Director/writer Christopher Frieri is back again, after his last indie effort, *THE ORBITRONS*. And like that tale, this is a b&w throwback to those cheapjack '50s monster movies, incorporating teens, murder, monsters, and a wild rockin' soundtrack. It all begins when a trio of greaser delinquents beat up the new kid at school in the boys' room. But in this instance, the geeky guy is an Egyptian exchange student named Rhada Mahat (Raymond, for short), who seeks revenge by kidnapping a deb named Stella (who he's convinced is the reincarnation of Isis) and turning her into a bandage-swaddled, killer teenage mummy! So pretty soon these Andrew Dice Clay-clones have more to worry about than just ballin' and brawl'n'—like getting their heads ripped off!... Frieri keeps all this nonsense quick paced and goofy, with some cheeseball gore effects tossed in to get the audience cheering. And he's got the pattern and patter of that old drive-in dreck down perfectly—right down to including a great (totally extraneous) rock 'n' roll number by The A-Bones. But the film's at its best when it strives for the truly bizarre, like a creepy visit to an asylum and a straightjacketed murder witness. Or the sight of Ms. Mummy riding a motorcycle! Most of the acting is Jersey-style thesping (with the high schoolers looking decidedly un-teenlike), and standout performances include Chris Tsakis, who's absurdly hard-boiled as Jack Boyle, a jazzy-lingoed private dick investigated the murders. Plus Ahmed Ben "Leo" Kalib is hilarious as "Raymond", stealing every scene by cackling, babbling and groveling. This guy goes beyond mere acting—instead it's as if he's having some type of psychotic seizure... Overall, a cool dose of cheap thrills. --Steve Puchalski

THE TEACHER (1974). Let's move onto something without any redeeming social value whatsoever (Yeah!)... I remember when this slopping of sexploitation first made its rounds at the local drive-ins. It was the leader of the tiny sub-genre of "Teacher T&A", and the whole point of it was the fantasy of having an older, experienced woman giving a young, dumb student their first taste of manhood. (It was also the antithesis of the equally popular Babysitter Films, which had an older hubbie popping a teenaged girl's cherry.) Well, when *THE TEACHER* hit my hometown in the early '70s, this kid would've given his left nut to check it out. And almost two decades later, I was still curious, since I still consider Angel Tompkins one of hottest femmes from that era (second only to Candy Rialson), with starring roles in small movies (*LITTLE CIGARS*) and supporting roles in studio work (*PRIME CUT*). She was perfect for the exploitation field—pretty, petite, blond, and with a great sleazy smile—and this tawdry flick is certainly willing to wallow in her wares. Angel plays the type of teacher every boy going through puberty wants to get. She's separated from her old man, takes long nude sunbaths on her boat, makes suggestive comments like "one of these days we're gonna have to spend some time together", and happens to live next door to a teen student of hers, Jay North (that's right, TV trivia buffs, it's the star of *DENNIS THE MENACE*!). Best of all, in order to keep the slobbering audience from getting restless while awaiting the big sex scenes, director Hikmet Avedis (*THE STEPMOTHER*) tosses a raving psychopath into the storyline, with ultra-quirky Anthony James hilariously filling the bill as a deranged Vietnam vet who plays voyeur with Ms. Tompkins and mistakenly thinks North killed his brother. As psychopath's go, he's a damned amusing one, whether he's tooling around suburbia in his hearse, or popping up (usually at the most absurd times) at someone's window for a long leer. The rest of the script is strictly by the book, with the seduction as the centerpiece of the film—when Angel invites Jay over to her place for some chores, gets him drunk on one lousy beer, and then teaches him the bonedance. For the rest of the film the foaming lustbirds play hide the salami, get ripped on cheap wine, and run from Anthony's threats, all the way to the surprisingly bummer ending... It's nothing but cheesy, unapologetic, adolescent T&A. But James' crackers routine and Angel's skimpy fashion sense take it a notch above the usual dreck. Not to mention music by Shorty Rogers. —Steve Puchalski



OZONE: THE ATTACK OF THE REDNECK MUTANTS (1988). How would you feel about a movie whose first scene has a farmer puking up green slop for several full minutes? Delightful, you say? Then this home-brewed horror romp from director Matt Devlen is definitely your speed, my demented friend. Obviously inspired by genre classics like *THE GORE GORE GIRLS*, the pic is crammed with outrageously putrid (not to mention downright silly) f/x. Eyes are popped out, a tongue is ripped out, heads are scalped, and the all-too-fake blood splatters the walls like it was being shot out of a lawn sprinkler. But there isn't much to recommend outside of the Gore Quotient. The startlingly-derivative screenplay of this dime-store plasma-fest features rural townsfolk turning into web-fingered, bloody-faced mutants. Devlen has a real feel

for these boony dirtbags (obviously he's run into his fair share of 'em in his lifetime), and they make the population of Hootersville look like NASA engineers. In fact, every character is stupid, unlikable or completely lacking in any charm except as potential corpses. And that includes the flick's cliché-ridden stars. One's a resourceful femme scientist, the other's an egotistical coward (providing the unsuccessful "comic relief"), and both spend the film running from these wacky monsters (who are so pathetically incompetent at terrorizing they resort to hurling melons at their victims). All this nonsense is eventually blamed on the deteriorating ozone layer due to a chemical plant leak, but by then most of the town's toothless, brainless residents have been turned into blood-thirsty creatures resembling char-broiled country-western groupies. Obviously, NONE of this is to be taken seriously, and it's all so cheezily produced, we never do. Though it gets a bit tired after a while, Devlen keeps a swift, empty-headed pace, and the movie's good for some gross-out laughs (if nothing more). —Steve Puchalski

UNDYING LOVE (1991). After guzzling down several pitchers on a Saturday night, me and the rest of the Shock Squad headed to a midnight showing of this independently-made vampire flick at an East Village multi-plex. To our surprise (not to mention, difficult-to-stifle laughter), the film was being shown in 8mm, so the picture only took up about one-fifth the normal size of the screen. We plopped down in the second



row, and the image was still only about the size of a widescreen TV...This NYC bloodsucker opus was quickly deemed NEW DRAC CITY by one of our crooked crew, but the boredom factor quickly took its toll on us all. The basic premise has Scott, our near-suicidal hero (who nearly offs himself at the start by slitting his wrists), meeting Carmilla, a death-obsessed model (and from the look of her, she must be unemployed a lot). After she goes down on him (complete with tasty Blowjob Cam!), Scott starts pissing blood and begins looking mighty pale. I'd wager it's because Carmilla is one of those undead vampire chicks (who, according to the script, was "seduced during the French Revolution"), and it turns out Scott is one of her luckier victims, because normally she not only alleviates her dates of their plasma supply, but also their testicles. Soon Scott is chomping down raw ground round by the packageful, meeting a whole clique of undercover urban vampires, and complications ensue when an old vampire beau of Carmilla's, Evan, gets jealous and decides to take revenge by killing Scott's human squeeze...The whole production has good intentions, and is played relatively straight. Too bad it's such a mediocre movie. The acting is barely adequate (the stand-out is Lee Kayman as a detective on the case, earning most of the laughs from the late-night crowd), and you know you're in trouble when the background props have more personality than the leads. Plus moviegoers behind us were actually shouting out the plot twists before they happened. Admittedly, director Greg Lamberson comes up with an occasional good idea, like Evan taping razor blades to his fingertips in preparation of a kill, but there aren't enough of those moments to recommend this derivative indie effort. —Steve Puchalski •

DOLLMAN (1990). Poor Tim Thomerson. You know, I really like the guy. I still vividly recall his stand-up routines from the early '80s (remember his Charles Bronson ordering at McDonalds?). And I enjoyed his work in genre stand-outs like TRANCERS. But this celluloid migraine is the absolute dregs. It's an inept,

unimaginative, juvenile, straight-to-video rip-off, and though it's hard to believe, director Albert Pyun has actually gotten more inept since his early SWORD AND THE SORCEROR days. Got the point yet?...Tim plays Brick Bardo, a tough futuristic cop. But one day, while he's chasing after a bodyless super-villain (Bardo blew away the guy's body during a previous encounter, and now his head floats about in an anti-gravity collar), their spaceships pass through a dimensional rift, and they both plop down in the middle of the present-day South Bronx. The only catch: They're only 13 inches tall! And before long they're on opposing sides of a drug/gang war, with a badly-aged Jackie Earle Haley stumbling in as the city's oldest living gang member. Hell, the guy must be pushing the wrong side of 30 nowadays, but still stuck with the same punk role in had in THE BAD NEWS BEARS...Yes, it's difficult to find a film that's such a unique combination of technical and conceptual crappiness. The special effects are stunningly incompetent—you can see the process boxes around the spaceships as they fly, the anti-grav collar is hung from clearly-visible wires, and the backgrounds never match and keep shifting colors. Any attempt at humor consists of people repeatedly telling Thomerson how "tiny" he is, after which he does a slow burn. And whenever it tries to get dramatic and preachy (which is continually), you wanna switch the dial to something more fascinating—like C-SPAN. The only thing I enjoyed were the couple of gory moments at the very beginning, when Thomerson's high-powered pistol literally blows his victims into meaty chunks. But the rest is uninvolved grade-Z rubbish. Flush it. —Steve Puchalski

TOMORROW'S CHILDREN (1934). So you think REEFER MADNESS or COCAINE FIENDS is twisted? Think again, because when it comes to early American exploitation, THIS film is the king of 'em all! Because this flick, believe it or not, promotes the positive value of government imposed sterilization! The family at the center of the story is a gene pool nightmare, complete with a drunken father, plus handicapped and retarded kids (or as the Doc sympathetically refers to them, "a house full of idiots and cripples"). So the State recommends that the entire brood be sterilized for the good of the community, with the judge threatening to take away their welfare checks if they refuse. What a hospitable idea! Rid the country of the feeble-minded, drug-addicted and generally unfit by casually handing out sterilizations like they were parking tickets! And the filmmakers even spent a few bucks on this piece of tawdry propaganda, unlike similarly lurid roadshow productions. High melodrama ensues when the family's oldest daughter (the only "normal" one in the bunch, who wants to get married and have kids) is taken to the high-tech hospital by the cops. A doctor poses a few ethical questions about the morality of the operation, and buys just enough time to end with a suspenseful, down-to-the-wire finale...Still, the bottom line of the movie is that if they aren't productive members of society it's perfectly all right to rip their sex organs out! A little then-racy medical jargon about vasectomies is tossed in to titillate the viewers,

and we even get to watch the operation itself, with the patient awake and bitching the whole time. Though barely 50 minutes long, this is an unforgettable document of mankind's pigheaded idiocy. And though it's chock full of campy laughs, the scariest thing about this movie is the fact that some '90s dimwits probably still think (and I use the term "think" loosely) that sterilization is a viable answer to society's ills. As far as I'm concerned, THOSE are the types who should be castrated first, so that their genes won't be passed onto future generations. —Steve Puchalski

THE TOXIC AVENGER PART III: THE LAST TEMPTATION OF TOXIE (1990). You've gotta hand it to those Troma blokes. They don't waste any opportunity, no matter how slight. In this case they had a little leftover footage from TOXIC AVENGER 2, so they cobbled together an entire fuckin' feature film! Not since Corman's halcyon drive-in days have filmmakers been so crassly willing to piecemeal a movie from loads of old footage, cutting room scraps, and a spur-of-the-moment narration to baste it all together. The end product is the dumbest thing I've seen in months (and that's saying a LOT!), with no continuity, no attempt at acting, no semblance of direction, barely a script, and not one iota of class or logic. In other words, it's a Tromanure classic! I've gotta admit, I actually enjoyed this installment more than the second one, because it's just so unapologetically lame!...Equipped with his handy janitor's mop, our radioactively mutated Toxic Avenger is still ridding Tromaville of evil, by ripping out criminals' large intestines while making witless wisecracks that make old Roger Moore/007 movies look like Edward Albee. The vague remnants of a storyline involves Toxie's loss of faith, because there isn't enough crime to get rid of. And when his blind fiancée (platinum-blond bone-hardener Phoebe Legere, once again playing his ditz, spread-legged squeeze) needs \$357,000 for an eye operation, Toxie stoops so low as to take a job as an I.R.S. agent. And even worse, work at a video store (horrors!). He's finally tempted by the nefarious mega-conglomerate Apocalypse Inc., which is actually run by Satan himself, and after selling his eternal soul, Toxie naturally becomes a Yuppie. Happily, by the end Toxie comes to his senses and battles a rubber-suited Satan in the mind-deranging finale...Directors Michael Herz and Lloyd Kaufman were never known for their subtlety behind the camera, and this is no exception, cramming every shot with pathetic jokes and butt-ugly extras. The film has a difficult time sustaining its high stupidity level though, and it (unfortunately) more often goes for silly satire than the gratuitous, imaginative gore which the first TOXIC wallowed in. Still, it's the best terrible movie to hit video racks in many a moon. And the more altered the viewer is, the more entertained they'll be by it all. —Steve Puchalski

DOOR TO DOOR MANIAC (1961). Looking for some trashy nonsense? Well, I guarantee this chunk of drive-in swill will have you howling from start to finish, primarily due to its fascinating, psycho performance by a young, obviously coked-out-of-his-skull Johnny Cash, who plays the title character. Nowadays, Cash probably wishes he could round up all the prints of this thing and burn 'em, but as far as I'm concerned, this film is one of the best things he's ever done. The first time we see him, Johnny's machine-gunning a cop in cold blood, with veins bulging



in his temples and heavy bags under his eyes. And his character is one of the most whacked-out celluloid crazies of all time...Basically, the film itself is your standard thriller, with veteran screen goon Vic Tayback narrating the tale in flashback crime noir fashion. Vic's half-baked robbery plan revolves around a bank's vice president and his wife—by holding the woman hostage, the vice prez will have to hand over all the loot, or lose his better half. Pretty average stuff, all in all, but Cash takes his kidnapper role into a new dimension of dementia. He invades the suburban household, his gun in one hand, guitar in the other, and then proceeds to make himself at home, coming onto the wife, making her dress up in her frilliest negligee, and singing her the toe-tapping little ditty, "Five Minutes to Live" (written by Cash). In the early '60s, this must've been pretty sleazy stuff. But in the '90s, it's utterly hilarious, and no matter how good your imagination, you can't forget that this guy who's slapping around a housewife on-screen is the same person who gave us "A Boy Named Sue" and "What is Truth?"... Director Bill Karn gives the proceedings an efficient B-movie air, but with the exception of Cash's hopped-up histrionics, it's pretty forgettable. There's a somnabulistic subplot about the hubbie's marital problems and infidelity, and even Ron Howard (age 8) pops up on hiatus from THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW to play the snotty-nosed kid (and during one optimistic moment, almost gets shot!). But it's Johnny's show, without a doubt, and trash mavens will revel in his googly-eyed "acting" ability. —Steve Puchalski

MARS NEEDS WOMEN (1966). Larry Buchanan is probably one of the most inept genre filmmakers to hit the scene since Doris Wishman. Not only were his fly-by-night features pathetically lensed, acted and stitched together, they were in most cases complete rip-offs of earlier B-movies. His ZONTAR, THE THING FROM VENUS was a retread of IT CONQUERED THE WORLD; THE EYE CREATURES had the gall to copy INVASION OF THE SAUCERMEN; and the most shocking thing is that these decade-later facsimiles were even more ludicrous than the nickel-'n'-dime originals! Hard to believe. Well, MARS NEEDS WOMEN (the best-titled of his filmography) is actually a remake of PAJAMA PARTY, a '64 beach comedy starring Tommy Kirk as a alien being on a search for babes. Buchanan was lucky (?) enough to snag Kirk for this version too (of course, after Disney teen roles in OLD YELLER and THE SHAGGY DOG, Tommy's phone wasn't exactly ringing off the hook), along with soon-to-be Batgirl, Yvonne Craig, and then wrongheadedly tries to make it into a serious science fiction drama! No luck, Larry! Because audiences have been laughing through this abomination of yours for the last quarter-century, beginning with the first dopey sequences of women across the nation literally disappearing from the dining table, in the middle of showers, et cetera. Then the Air Force receives a simple three word message from outer space: "Mars Needs Women". So obviously they're taking ours! Tommy is the leader of the Martian mission, and the first stop for him and his interplanetary pals is a department store for some natty suits and ties (you wouldn't want to be underdressed when you're kidnapping earth dames for impregnation, would you?), and then they split up to find "unmarried, healthy" females. Since their ship only has room for five extra passengers, their choices have to be good ones (and if only five ladies are expected to repopulate their planet, they better have a lotta stamina). The smartest of their lot immediately heads for a burlesque club, another finds a stewardess, and even a Homecoming Queen is prey to their Martian hypnotism. When Tommy decides to check out a highly-technical

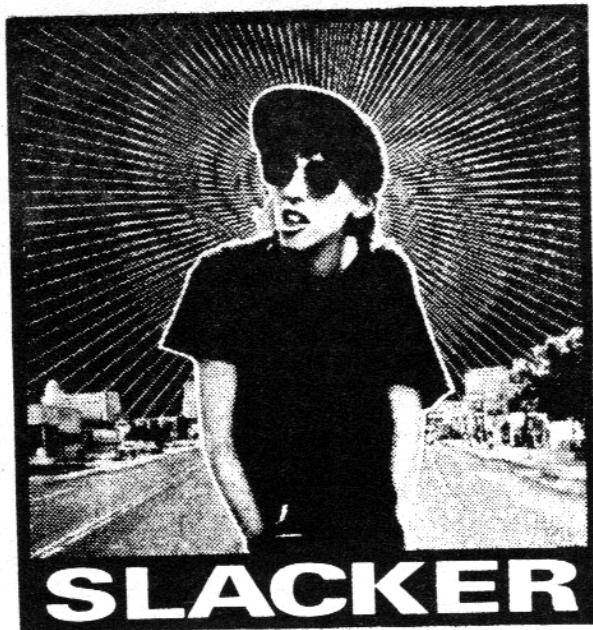
discussion panel entitled "Sex and Outer Space", he runs into cute Yvonne Craig as a brainy scientist-chick (hence the tacky eye glasses), takes her out for a quick rendezvous at a children's "Trip to Mars" ride (some hot date, eh?), and forgets all about his mission... Sounds like fun? WRONG! After the first half hour, it's deadly boring, with long scenes of government clowns talking, talking and talking. Plus static camerawork, barren sets, stock footage to pad the running time (Whaddaya mean, it's only 80 minutes? It felt longer than The Jerry Lewis Telethon!), and a cast of Texas stiffies. Most of Buchanan's films never made it to theatre screens, going straight to late night TV instead. That's as it should be, because they work better as a cure for insomnia than as action-packed entertainment. —Steve Puchalski

FEEDING FRENZY (1990). Self-titled an "obsession in 5 parts", this is a mixed media look at modern urban decay and society's demise. A portrait of the poor, the drugged and the deranged, all living in the niches of today's society. Meshing documentary and performance art, director Frank Garvey begins his tale of burnt out souls in a burnt out factory district, with our blue-collar narrator Jim Burkhart taking us into the lives of an assortment of desperate characters---an exotic stripper/heroin addict, a man whose arms were amputated as a child, derelicts obsessed with armageddon, and a sex booth worker. Some of their tales are stunningly depressing, yet savage beauty and even joy are found in the strangest, darkest moments. The film's dazzling execution is what sets it apart from most independently-produced poseur parades, since Garvey turns the proceedings into an almost dreamlike swirl of video effects and editing. And though occasionally pretentious to the point of laughter, many of the images are equally unforgettable (like the ghostly laundry-bagged figures in the sidelines). Urban despair is universal, but rarely has it been presented so elegantly. With a clear head and a keen eye Garvey shows us the debris from this industrial (sew)age. At 80 minutes, this barrage is a little too much to digest (similar to a 23 course meal, when a 12 would be sufficient), but it's also rare to find a piece which can shake your sensibilities, while keeping a brain in its head. --Steve Puchalski

THE SWILL AND THE SWELL

And just in case you haven't gotten your fill of movie reviews, here's some quick observations on everything else... Wim Wenders' **UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD** got a lot of flack from the critics because it was big, expensive and unfocused. Hell, if a director is gonna "waste" several million bucks, I'd rather see Wim do it than anyone else, because at least his film shows every penny on the screen. He travelled to half a dozen different countries to tell this shaggy dog tale of William Hurt and Wenders-squeeze Solveig Dommartin chasing each other across the globe, and fills the first two hours with wonderous sights and good throwaway gags. Too bad it turns to lead at the end, when arthouse fossils Max Von Sydow and Jeanne Moreau turn up. Plus the soundtrack's even better than the film... Ken Russell's **WHORE** barely played the theatre circuit. I figured it was due to its NC-17 rating, which would make it taboo in most suburban google-plexes. After seeing it, I realize the real reason was because the distributor feared that theatre ceilings would cave in from the intense laughter coming from the audience. This is a truly stinky movie, and I loved it for all the wrong reasons. A cliché-fest about a hooker with a heart of gold, starring Teresa Russell (who supposedly put on all that poundage just to look like a real hooker. Thanks loads, Teresa). Surprisingly inept garbage for Ken, but sleazily enjoyable, with a great supporting role by Antonio "Huggy Bear" Fargas... Finally, after almost two years on the shelf, multiple distributors, and several different promised versions, we get to see Dennis Hopper's cut of **BACKTRACK**, starring himself and Jodie Foster. Jodie's a conceptual artist who's witness to a mob hit, so syndicate chief Vincent Price (Vincent Price?!?) sends rubout-artist Hopper after

her. Too bad The Hop falls for her along the way. This is a cheezy little thriller, which Dennis manages to save by recruiting lotsa friends to chew the scenery along with him (Joe Pesci, John Turturro, and even Bob Dylan!). Plus he somehow convinced Jodie to do her first shower scene and romp around in black lingerie, which is good enuf for me... I'm not sure if you've heard of this movie called **WAYNE'S WORLD** yet (joke), but it's actually a load of laughs. Wayne and Garth are basically a '90s, drug-free version of Cheech and Chong, and hopefully the film is such a mega-hit that director Penelope Spheeris won't be forced to make female wrestling videos anymore in order to pay the bills... If you're in search of something different, you could do a lot worse than Richard Linklater's **SLACKER**, a low-budget flick which wins you over with its filmmaking exuberance and peculiar vision of the lifestyles of the poor and aimless. A slacker is that particular kind of underachiever who's usually observed around the perimeters of a university (you know the type---aging hippies, musicians, writers, assorted burn-outs---and if you aren't one yourself, you've probably known a few). And Linklater constructs a seamless portrait of an average day in a Texas college town. The structure is intended to seem stream-of-consciousness (with the camera's attention passing from one oddball to another, like a relay baton), but the pic is actually a tight, skillfully constructed effort. Lots of hilarious moments, a little hit-and-miss, but very enjoyable... I swear **THE LAWNMOWER MAN** must be the most idiotic science fiction muddle of the year (though I haven't seen **FREEJERK**, er, **FREEJACK**, so I might be wrong). A terrible movie that combines **FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON** with **CARRIE**, then



fuses the concept of virtual reality (wrongheadedly) into the plot because the concept is "In". Jeff Fahey (who was OK in swill like **BODY PARTS**) gives an abysmal performance as the retarded title character (you can tell he's mentally handicapped because he doesn't comb his hair and his tongue is always hangin' out). No logic, no entertainment value, and totally braindead... One of my favorite films from last year was Mike Leigh's **LIFE IS SWEET**. I hope it comes out on video soon, because probably most of you will never have a chance to see it in the theatre. In the tradition of Leigh's **HIGH HOPES** and **MEANTIME**, it's a slice-of-lifer set within the British working class, with the entire cast filling their roles as if they weren't even acting. At times disconcertingly true to life and full of wry laughs... In the same league is Hal Hartley's **TRUST**. I liked his first feature, **THE UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH**, and I loved his latest effort. Quirky (in the best sense of the word)

and populated with screwed-up characters, the result is charming without ever becoming cloying. Whether you buy into his stories or not, Hartley is one of the few new American filmmaker's with a distinct outlook and style...**HEARTS OF DARKNESS: A FILMMAKER'S APOCALYPSE** is essential viewing for any fan of **APOCALYPSE NOW**. Charting the making of that problem-plagued production, this often feels like an extended version of one of those cheezy HBO "Making of" fillers (especially when the particularly vapid Eleanor Coppola is pontificating), but director Fax Bahr had use of cutting room clippings (an eerie sequence in a French mansion), outtakes (Lardo Brando swallowing a bug), and audio tapes of Francis Ford on the edge of a breakdown. Plus lots of behind-the-scenes footage of out-of-control moviemaking at its finest. I only wish the film had been more exhaustive, because a lot of questions still weren't answered....Everyone had



Shakes the Clown

high hopes for **KAFKA**, since Steven Soderbergh's first film was the incredible **SEX, LIES AND VIDEOTAPE**. It's an entertaining mess, but nothing more, and if you're looking for info on Franz or his literature, **FORGET IT!** (Any reference to his work amounts to, "Hey, Kafka! Whatcha been writing?" "Oh, a story about a man who turns into a giant bug.") Soderbergh takes the character, tosses him into a conspiracy thriller, then mixes in a Hammer Studios-style monster and an ending straight out of **BRAZIL**. Jeremy Irons gives a one-note performance, the script bites, but at least the pic **LOOKS** terrific!...For a **TRULY** demented evening of cinema, look for comic genius Bobcat Goldthwait's directorial premiere (yes, I used the term "comic genius" in tandem with Bobcat's name. If you don't like it, fuck you). **SHAKES THE CLOWN** rushed through NYC theatres faster than a Thai breakfast buffet through your small intestine, but if it hits your town **RUN** to catch it. Though often amateurish, and compromised by the fact Bobcat had to give the film a "story", it's also an absolutely brilliant blend of **BARFLY** meets Bozo ("Bozofly?"), with Bobcat portraying an alcoholic birthday clown. Him and all his clown buddies swig back drinks at The Twisted Balloon cocktail lounge, drive around drunk, beat up mimes, and act just like we always figured clowns acted after the show was over. Just the opening scene, of Bobcat rolfing up his liquid diet in Florence Henderson's bathroom and getting pissed on by her brat is worth the price of admission. It's comedy with a hacksaw. Bring the kiddies!...**SPIRIT OF '76** is a silly, often uproarious comedy which tried for midnight movie status (and failed). It's the story of three time travellers (one of them is David Cassidy!) who plan on visiting the birth of our nation and accidentally wind up in 1976 instead. This film is a must for anyone who remembers The Hustle, Pacers, Grand Funk Railroad, 8 tracks, EST, discos, Pop Rocks, and all that bicentennial hooley. Plus it co-stars the hilarious Jeff and Steve McDonald from Red Kross, as a pair of '70s dudes. Not to mention, **GREAT** costumes by Sofia Coppola (who should continue in that line of work, and forget thesping)...From Hong Kong's adrenaline-meister, John Woo, comes **BULLET IN THE HEAD**, his biggest, most painful production yet! If you thought his earlier munitions 'n' macho-fest **THE KILLER** was intense, wait until you experience this epic! Beginning in the late '60s, it's the story of three Chinese punks who decide to make their illegit fortune by running contraband into Vietnam. And everything that can go wrong does, complete with prisoner of war camps, double crosses, and (of course) piles and piles of bullet-riddled corpses. Lacks the lean

quality of **THE KILLER**, but makes up for it with huge, expensive, ultra-violent set pieces...Oh, by the way, **HUDSON HAWK** is indeed as wretched as everyone said. Not even Sandra Bernhard or Richard E. Grant can save this bloated turd. Bruce Willis should be castrated if he ever tries to sing onscreen again...David Cronenberg may not have made everyone happy with his version of **NAKED LUNCH**, but I certainly wasn't disappointed. Any film that kicks off with Judy Davis getting high by injecting a syringe of bug powder into her breast can't be all bad. And Cronenberg mixes Burrough's life and literature into this often funny portrait of drug addiction and the creative edge. Peter Weller is bone-dry and brilliant as "Will Lee". Cronenberg comes up with some unnerving imagery (so what else is new?), and it's the most off-the-wall major league release of '91. I'd have loved to have seen the studio execs when they caught the first preview screening—they must've been pissin' their pants at what their money had wrought...Patsy Kensit is smart, witty and incredibly sexy in the British working class drama **TWENTY-ONE**. Too bad the film itself is so utterly predictable. A cliché-bound portrait of an independent young woman dealing with life in the '90s, which only keeps you riveted by Kensit's natural allure. And while I'm gushing about her, Patsy can also be found in the sf/thriller **TIMEBOMB**, co-starring with Michael Biehn. It's a pulpy variation on the ol' **MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE**-brainwashing concept, but with lots of mindless bloodshed covering up the lack of any fresh ideas. Adequately watchable, with Kensit as the obligatory femme in danger (albeit a brainy one)...My candidate for lost gem of last year is the Canadian-lensed **THE REFLECTING SKIN**, which exposes its viewers to one of the most nihilistic storylines in recent memory, in addition to some searingly-disturbing imagery. It's life as usual in a tiny rural town, as seen through the eyes of a warped little boy who likes to blow up frogs, keeps a mummified baby under his bed, thinks the widow down the road is a vampire, and has not only a fudgepacking dad, but a psycho-mom. Including such toe-tapping subplots as child murder and radiation sickness, this is without question **NOT** the feel-good film of the year. Radiantly lensed, wonderfully acted, and just plain fucking grim...**THE DARK BACKWARD** wants to be a cult movie soooo badly, that I almost felt bad that it doesn't succeed. Striving for a John Waters' style of hilarious perversity, director Adam Rifkin creates a fully realized world of garbage, losers and despair, with Judd Nelson going out on a limb by greasing down his hair and playing a pathetic stand-up comic (who only achieves success when he grows a third arm out of his back). Plus, the supporting cast is pretty strange too—including Wayne Newton, James Caan and Rob Lowe. **BUT** the problem is that the pic is never very funny or even grungy enough, and most importantly lacks a personal edge that all the best twisted auteurs have. Some terrific moments, but more fascinating than entertaining. (Still, I'd rather watch this than 99% of the Whorwood swill.)...**DELICATESSAN** is the funniest film about cannibalism I've seen so far this decade! An incredible futuristic farce set in a world of **BRAZIL**-ian retro-grubbiness, featuring a deli butcher who slice 'n' dices building Supers in order to feed the other tenants. Wonderfully choreographed gags and a blistering sense of humor make the film a success, but it's the smaller bits of business that linger long afterward. Such the old man who breeds frogs and snails in his water-logged apartment. An early fave of '92!...And as I go to press, I finally saw **BASKET CASE 3: THE PROGENY**, which is hopefully the last in the series. I loved the first, thought the second was O.K., but this one simply bored me with its lack of heart and overdose of latex. All the old seediness is gone, replaced with silly jokes, stereotypes and (admittedly cool) f/x. Please, no Part 4, Frank!



MUSIC VIDEOS

PUBLIC ANIMAL: G.G. ALLIN AT THE LISMAR LOUNGE (1987). Looking for the perfect video to slap in the VCR at the next holiday gathering, with grandma, grandpa and all the impressionable little tykes sitting around the TV? THIS AIN'T IT!! Because even though the box promises "nothing but love songs", you've got to realize that G.G. Allin's list of all-time favorite long songs includes such toe-tappers as "Teenage Twats", "Tough Shit, I'm a Rapist", "Drink, Fight, Fuck" and the ever-popular "Rape You". In other words, this is 25 minutes of hardcore Allin, filmed on November 4, 1987 at the lovely Lismar Lounge (1st Avenue between 1st and 2nd). And despite the bleached out, muddy photography, we can still make out every wrinkle on G.G.'s bare ass when he take the stage (ain't we the lucky ones?). A man of little wardrobe (a G-string, dogtags and sunglasses), Allin brings a whole new meaning to the term 'stage presence', combining the unbridled energy of a young Tom Jones with the temperament of a pissed-off Charlie Manson. Often, you can barely make out the lyrics to the half dozen songs over the mega-fuzz from the speakers, and Allin complements his repertoire by playing with his asshole, showing off his homemade tats, writhing on the stage while playing with his crotch, or acknowledging his adoring, burnt-out audience at the end of a song with "Fuck me, you fucking cunt!" (you know, most singers would've stuck with that overused "Thank you, folks"). In other words, this is a document that doesn't get any better! Short, shrill and sweaty, plus it's a lot safer than actually attending one of G.G.'s performances (where you take your chance at getting hit with fresh feces). —Steve Puchalski

THE EYE SCREAMS: A HISTORY OF THE RESIDENTS (1990). This video is a must for any fan of that ever-concealed quartet, The Residents. For over 15 years, this enigmatic band has been churning out audio & video craziness, and this collection gives us a fine overview of their eclectic career. Normally these types of compilation projects SUCK (because the bottom line is making a quick buck), but this one is an exception, since it's crammed with rare footage and hosted by long-time friend Penn Jillette. Not to mention featuring some of the most twisted visuals to ever come out of the music industry. These guys were performance artists long before every trendy fuck was calling themselves one, and their science fiction hallucinogenic arthouse rhythms mesh with images as ingenious and surrealistic as anything since FORBIDDEN ZONE. Included in the package are Japanese TV appearances; local NYC news items on 'em; their gig on Dave Sanborn's late, lamented NIGHT MUSIC; a live performance of "It's A Man's Man's Man's World" from '84; and a highlight is their rendition of Elvis' "Hound Dog", which sounds like it's sung by a throat cancer patient on 'ludes. Their epic is the devastatingly damaged "Whatever Happened to Vileness Fats" (1984), which plays like a live action Starevitch cartoon...Sure, it's a little distressing when a song is clipped short, and the inane interviews (with record execs and pals) intrude too often, but this is still a hilarious, tripped-out chronicle of this ever-mutating band of wiseass geniuses. —Steve Puchalski

WAYNE NEWTON AT THE LONDON PALLADIUM (1983). I had high hopes that this video would be chock full of campy laughs. No such luck. It's devoid of pleasure, unless you enjoy ranking on a talentless weasel. Stuffed in a tux, his hair greased back with half a can of Crisco, and wearing a gold belt huge enough to double as a World Wrestling Federation Trophy, Wayne takes his money-shoveling, long-running Las Vegas stagershow to England, so all the blue-haired society matrons in the U.K. can get a look at this 6th-rate Elvis Presley-clone. From the blues ("Georgia") and Broadway show tunes ("The Impossible Dream"), to country standards ("Jambalaya") and lyrical diarrhea (self proclaimed "Newton classics", such as "Danke Schoen"), this man works harder for less results than any other performer in show business, homogenizing everything into a white, flavorless paste. Lugging a 42 piece orchestra with him overseas, Wayne has been dragging himself through this same sorry-assed routine for so many years that he's been wrung dry of spontaneity—running through his rancid repertoire with more of an eye on his bank balance than his performance. His trio of black female back-up singers look bored throughout, and embarrassed to be stuck working for this rich honky shitpile. But what the man lacks in singing talent, he makes up for in obnoxious egotism a dozen times over. He acts like he's the filet mignon of the music world, when actually he's just the Spam of lounge acts...Wanna know exactly how painful Wayne is? Well, when he breaks into the A.M.-perennial "I Am, I Cried", I actually began to miss Neil Diamond's rendition! That's pretty fuckin' painful, if you ask me! Truly, this is a videotape guaranteed to clear any room (not to mention most bowels at the same time). I suggest that the next time this contemptible clod leaves the country, we lock the doors behind him. —Steve Puchalski

Jerry Weintraub & Concerts West Present

*First Tour
in
10 years
TOMORROW
Live in Concert*

wayne

NEWTON



PSYCHIC TV: MAPLE SYRUP (Jettisoundz, P.O. Box 30, Lytham St. Annes, FY8 1RF, England; 1991). This latest compilation from Genesis P-Orridge and the cool folks at Psychic TV is actually a time capsule of their live performances. With footage ranging from '87 to '89, much of it is grainy, video-cam documentation. The earliest footage is simply via a guy in the crowd with a camera, panning across the performers and occasionally taking in a nearby TV's hallucinogenic imagery. But their intensity increases over time, as does the refinement of their now-infamous acidhouse visual bombardment. We're rewarded by disorienting, rapid-fire visuals and a Ken Russell-esque melange

of angels, brides, fire, skulls, plus lots and lots of solarization. In other words, a shitload of Catholic symbolism strained through a sheet of blotter. Sounding more (dare I say it?) melodic than usual, the songlist includes such faves as "L.A. Angel", "Seduce Me", "Your Body", and the heart-wrenching bellows of "Candy Says". Plus, I loved watching Genesis' evolution (or should I say de-evolution) over the years. And he always looks like he's in the midst of a stroke, warbling and shaking uncontrollably, his eyes ready to pop out and catapult across the room. Now THAT'S stage presence! Though not as consistently drug-drenched and inspiring to the subconscious as their other videos through Jettisoundz (JOY and 8TRANSMISSIONS8), this is a must for fans of Genesis' aural regurgitation. As for non-fans? Well, they'll just look very pissed off at you for slapping this tape in the VCR. Fuck 'em. —Steve Puchalski

MUSIC

THE HORSEFLIES "Gravity Dance" (MCA Records). Hailing from Ithaca, The Horseflies have been New York State's best kept secret for many years. Starting out in bluegrass, the Flies have kept true to their roots while combining those traditional American rhythms with the musical sensibilities of Laurie Anderson and the sense of humor of David Byrne. Their 1987 release, *HUMAN FLY*, is a stoned journey through the depressions of drug addiction and living where it rains all the time. Christ, they even do a bluegrass version of a Cramps tune. Having fleshed out their line-up to include a keyboard and drums, their tunes have all taken on a similar quality, and there's really no distinction between tunes now. Apparently their usual quirkiness was stepped on by MCA to make more money, which of course they didn't, since their integrity was compromised. Still, a mediocre Flies album is better than 90% of all the rest of the crap that's out today and if you don't know them, this is a real good place to start. —Steve Shapiro

BLACK 47 (c/o Paddy Reilly's, 495 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10016). Make no mistake, this is one great bar band. The hard time they've been putting in every Wednesday and Saturday night on the tiny stage in the sardine can ambiance of Paddy Reilly's over on Third Avenue shows. Live, whether in the abbreviated version that fits on the stage at Paddy's or with a couple of extra players down at Wetlands, they are serious big fun, and a good ninety per cent of that comes over on this CD/Tape. The music is straight ahead pop eclecticism and from the white rap of "Rockin' the Bronx" to the reggae feel of "Desperate" to the curiously bluesy "40 Shades of Blue", they rock like Mount Rushmore. Or maybe they rock more like the Blarney Stone. "Black 47" refers to the worst year of the potato famine in Ireland, 1847, when whole villages starved, and thousands who could, emigrated to "Ameri-kay". This is a band of contemporary Irish immigrants and the subject matter of these literate songs as well as the music is distinctly shaped by that experience. Traditional Irish musical influences (if that phrase makes you think of "The Unicorn" to hell with you) pervade this album as their instrumentals frequently quote "Jigs and Reels and Shlides"... The blues ballad "40 Shades of Blue" is an astonishing, ballsy reworking of a tune originally meant for a Keats poem called "Down by the Sally Garden" which was not about life—"Down there on Bleecker Street/with your hand out, on the bum." The tragic "Fanatic Heart" and "Her Dear Old Donegal" owe clear debts to traditional slow airs for all of their trombone solos and trancy instrumental passages. And, as if to carry all this Irish/Rock mixture to the final extreme, the rap-like "Land of DeValera" starts with a big scratch beat played over the sampled voice of Eamonn DeValera, an early Irish prime minister. Larry Kerwan's lead vocals have a gutsy shouted quality that owes nothing to the "Irish Tenor" tradition and much to Bruce Springsteen. Their instrumental mix, which includes Uilleann Pipes (the sweeter, hand-pumped, Irish bagpipes) and Bodhran (a booming hand drum), as well as a wailing tenor sax, guitar, bass, synths and an ill-considered drum machine, gives them a distinctive, harsh yet musical sound that is not quite like anything else you've ever heard in a bar at two in the morning...In sum, these guys are a good time, buy the album or better, go see them live. You'll scream yourself hoarse, dance yer ass off and if you're lucky, maybe they'll do their kick-ass cover of "I Fought The Law", an Irish song if there ever was one. —Chris Doherty



LIDA HUSIK "Bozo" (shimmy disc, jaf box 1187, ny ny 10116). This album was a wonderful surprise! A dreamy dose of aural trippiness and a one-woman showcase, with Lida not only writing all the songs and providing the vocals, but playing most of the instruments too. And this, her first LP, is a knock-out. Shimmy Disc describes the package as a "dance mess for the future"—if the dancers are on laudanum, that is. Because Lida's work has more of a slow, ethereal quality, and her songs float along on their own remarkable power, with rhythms that keep circling through your head long afterward, as in "Hateful Hippie Girls", "Billboard" and the cool title track. Even when her style gets a little repetitive, the tunes remain charged by her hypnotic voice. And an especially beautiful closer is the acoustic "To Virginia"...Oh yeah, even the sleeve photos are great, with Lida hiding behind Bozo masks on the back. An impressively cool achievement. —Steve Puchalski

CHARLES MANSON "Lie" (Awareness Records). Apparently before Charlie perfected his current career as mass murderer and won the Most Likely to be Confused With Satan Award, he fancied himself a singer/songwriter. According to the sparse liner notes, these recordings were demos that Charlie recorded with The Family on a small tape recorder before the bloodbaths. All the producers of the time rejected the tunes, though Charlie did at one time befriend Brian Wilson (The Beach Boy DID record one of Manson's songs as a B-side). It's no wonder that he was never signed, because these songs really SUCK. Disjointed musical phrases, hippy dippy lyrics, a voice that sounds like Nixon trying to sell a used car...This stuff makes CSNY seem like Metallica. It's probably better off that Charlie is rotting in jail instead of killing us with his music. I would, however, recommend buying it. How many people you know have a Charles Manson album? It certainly makes the wrong impression. —Steve Shapiro

MENACE DEMENT. "Nanna"/"Small Town" (Lungcast Records, P.O. Box 2479, NY, NY 10009). An indie single whose success rests largely upon each song's poetic dimensions and the vocals by Casandra Stark. The music is nothing startling—a cacophony of pounding drums, fuzz guitar and even bells. But the lyrics hold dark, vivid images, which give the songs an edge. "Nanna" is a charming dirge in which "The Child insane, dances through the night."; while the anger-soaked "Small Town" pits her against unseen forces of nature. Meanwhile, Stark's hoarse, yet bedazzling voice bursts through all man-made barriers. She's deceptively melodic when the need arises, yet always ready to explode in a primal scream of rage, her enchantingly voice like a razor blade pulled seductively across your skin. --Steve Puchalski

KING MISSILE. "The Way to Salvation." (Atlantic Records). WOW! BUY THIS IMMEDIATELY! For those of you not familiar with King Missile, I repeat, BUY THIS IMMEDIATELY! For those who know the immaculate rantings of John Hall, BUY THIS IMMEDIATELY! A field guide to life, a bible, a history book, Krishna, Apocalypse, sadism, Lover and Casanova all rolled into one. Sample from savory tracks like "Sex With You" ("...and sometimes food, is all I really want"); "My Heart is a Flower" ("...making a big hopeless mess"); "I Wish" ("...I could drive the tractor of innocence"); "The Boy Who Ate Lasagna and Could Jump Over a Church", and the best song of 1991, "The Story of Willy"! BUY THIS IMMEDIATELY! —Steve Shapiro



PIMPS, PLAYERS & PRIVATE EYES. (Sire Records). Anyone who's reveled in those great black action flicks from the '70s knows that one primary factor to their success was their funky, kickass title tunes. Well, Jorge Hinojosa had the hot idea of collecting those classics into one compilation, and with the aid of Ice-T, this flashback to the halcyon days of the 42nd Street grindhouse was the result. Ten hot singles, and not a loser in the bunch! It kicks off with the incredible "Across 110th Street" from Bobby Womack and Peace, and (as if I weren't in heaven already) follows it up with The Impressions' "Make a Resolution" from the incredible THREE THE HARD WAY! This is a four-star line-up and a wet dream for blaxploitation addicts (like myself), with tunes from FOXY BROWN, TROUBLE MAN, CLEOPATRA JONES, and two buggin' chartbusters—Issac Hayes' "Theme From SHAFT" and Curtis Mayfield's "Pusherman" (from SUPERFLY). An essential acquisition for any fan of velour cinema, period. —Steve Puchalski

SMASHING PUMPKINS "Gish" (Caroline Records, 114 W. 26th St. NYC 10001). Chicago's Smashing Pumpkins are young, brash, tight, tuneful, emotional and ready for college airplay. The college station here in Miami can't get enough of the hauntingly beautiful "Rhinoceros". Esoteric and skillful, these guys can rock it up sweaty or slow down for a nice psychedelic ride into your subconscious. Not much to say except quickly becoming one of my favorite new bands. —Steve Shapiro

JELLYFISH KISS "Stormy Weather" (shimmy disc, jaf box 1187, new york, ny 10016). This UK band's third album certainly has lots of raw energy (but that's like saying a blind date has a "great personality"). Sure, it's a harsh, ear drum-abusive dose of droning rock 'n' roll, but it left me cold, with most of the songs running together after

awhile. The guitarwork, drumsmanship, and feedback drown out any semblance of lyrics most of the time, and at their best they edge toward psychedelia with some of their spacey instrumentals. While listening, the only thing that occurred to me is that these guys are probably a lot of fun in a live venue, after you've got a few (O.K., several) beers under your belt. Though this release didn't "blow my mind out of my skull forever," like the press release promised, after crankin' it LOUD through my headphones, I DID need a few aspirins. —Steve Puchalski

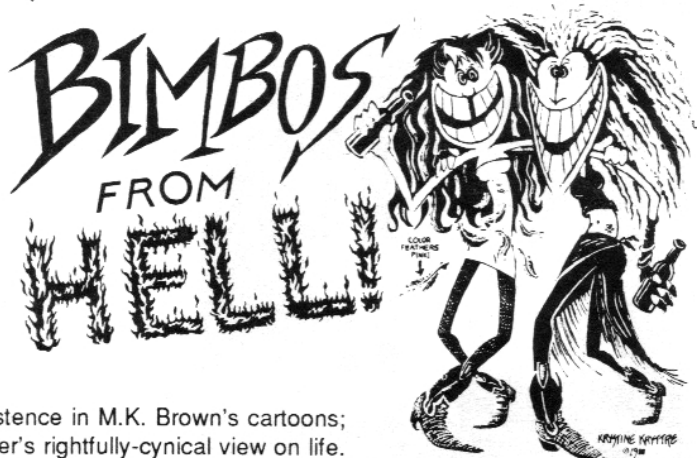
STEWART/GASKIN. "Spin" (Rykodisc). Finally a distributor has rescued this inventive duo from the "independent singles" zone and released two collections, "The Big Idea" and "Spin". What you've got here is a phenomenally talented keyboard player (Dave Stewart, and NOT the Eurythmics guy) whose resume includes heavy art-rock outfits like National Health and Bruford, and singer Barbara Gaskin, whose original and evocative style is perfectly complemented by the program, which blends cool original songs with overhauled covers of classic rock and pop tunes. The covers range from Billy Bragg to Dylan and Joni Mitchell, and all the songs feature dramatic arrangements and inspired solos. El recommendo. —Tavis Riker

CRASH TEST DUMMIES "The Ghosts That Haunt Me" (Arista). Wish I knew where these guys are from. They sound VERY English [Ed. note: They're Canadian]. A mish mash of styles run through that ol' musical cuisinart---comin' out smellin' like a wet Irish rose. All acoustic based, some Irish, some Scottish, some Country and Rock thrown in to make a real original sound (ahhh!). Not a bad apple in the bunch. Great dark lyrics about life, death, love, and prayer ("He says he'll turn to Jesus if he'll bail him out and buy him gin"). Brad Roberts has the lowest voice since Boris Gudonov, and Ellen Reid has a great pair of legs. Great cover of Replacements' "Androgynous"! --Steve Shapiro

CHAD WACKERMAN. "Forty Reasons" (CMP Records). What do Frank Zappa And Dennis Miller have in common? A drum chair! No, you haven't stumbled into 'Modern Drummer' magazine by mistake. This first solo recording from virtuoso percussionist Chad Wackerman isn't your typical "Drum Lesson Disguised as a Recording" syndrome that so many instrumental fusion albums suffer from. Wackerman has assembled great players (longtime co-horts Jimmy Johnson, Jim Cox, and the amazing Allan Holdsworth on guitar) for a set of high-energy jazz instrumentals, all driven by Chad's powerful polyrhythms. The Zappa influence is evident on some tracks, but Wackerman's style isn't marred by Zappa's sometimes funny, sometimes irritating lyric soapboxing. (Nonetheless, get well soon, FZ.) Definitely recommended for those who have been hoping that fuzak geeks like Kenny G. and Stanley Jordan would go away and make room for the exceptional musicians who can make instrumental jazz with an edge. —Tavis Riker

BOOKS

THE NEW COMICS ANTHOLOGY. Edited by Bob Callahan (Collier Books; 287 pages; \$19.95) and **TWISTED SISTERS: A COLLECTION OF BAD GIRL ART.** Edited by Diane Noomin (Penguin Books; 256 pages; \$14.95). It's about time SHOCK CINEMA got around to covering the world of underground comics, since I've been reading the damned things since I was an impressionable teen (the very first day I picked up a Gilbert Shelton comic, it was "Adios Batman! Hello Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers!"). Long ago, you had to go to a head shop in order to locate the things, but now they're popping up everywhere. As proof of their growing popularity, we offer you two new coffee table sized volumes which have pulled together (most of) the major talents in this diverse field. Men and women who spent their evenings cranking out personal obsessions, anecdotes or gnarled senses of humor onto paper, using pens, pencils or crayolas...If you're a complete newcomer to the field, a great place to begin is **THE NEW COMICS ANTHOLOGY**, which ranges from relative old timers to more experimental '90s newcomers. Focusing on artists from around the globe, it's a good overview for novices who want to experiment with all the various avenues—from realism to surrealism, from straight-forward narrative to stream of conscious storylines. Besides the obvious masters of the craft, like Will Eisner, Robert Crumb, Drew Friedman, and Harvey Pekar (all of which I'll read ANYTHING by), my favorites include the all-too-close-to-reality reportage of Peter Bagge's "In My Room", Howard Cruse's hilarious "Raising Nancies", and Rick Geary's tale of Charlie Chaplin's stolen corpse. But editor Callahan doesn't just go for the humorous edges of illoiland. He includes sections on politics, crime and society, with Mark Zingarelli's "The Cockeyed Cook Story" and Dennis Eichhorn & Michael Dougan's "Dennis the Sullen Menace" taking drastically different (but both brilliant) looks at crime and punishment in America. Sure, I can nitpick about this collection (some people get shortchanged, and it's never as cutting edge as RAW), but it's still great to see these artists getting more exposure (and hopefully making some bigger bucks from it all). Their work is wholly personal, uniquely savage and altogether entertaining...Which brings me to the other major collection to be published in the last year, **TWISTED SISTERS**. You need this! Pulling together 14 of today's finest female, underground cartoonists, editor Diane Noomin (who herself has been in the biz for years) gives each of them a lengthy chapter (nearly 20 pages apiece!) and lets the work speak, scream and rant for itself. This volume manages to capture not only their talent at the drawing board, but (not to make it sound pretentious, or anything) the simple fact of being female, with stories involving sex, love, menstruation, buying shoes, training bras, et cetera. We're treated to the wondrous absurdity of day to day existence in M.K. Brown's cartoons; Kystine Kryttre's incredible, stylized imagery; and Phoebe Gloeckner's rightfully-cynical view on life. Julie Doucet (**DIRTY PLOTTE**) manages to capture the most innocuous events of everyday life in a savage fashion, and entering her head takes you into a detail-packed world of beer, urban living, and darker dreams. Two of the collection's highpoints include the witty autobiographical tales of the late Dori Seda, and Leslie Sternbergh's beautifully rendered stories—which range from (slightly bizarre) youthful indulgences to barroom tales as vivid as anything of Bukowski's. **TWISTED SISTERS** is essential for any fan of modern illustration or anybody with a skewed sense of humor, giving readers (especially male ones) a unique look into these ladies' hearts and minds...And while I'm on the subject of comics, I guess it's a good time to cover a couple of other things that've turned up in my mailbox recently. And I'm all the better (not to mention more hung over) due to them. **TWISTED IMAGE** by Ace Backwards (Loompanics Unlimited; P.O. Box 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98368) is a full-scale howl. Ace has been churning out his comics for years, producing his own monthly newsletter and contributing to more fanzines than one human could possibly read in one lifetime, and now his efforts have found a home. Beginning with a Q&A intro with the author ("What motivates you?" "Hey, Ace, the rent is due on Monday!"), this 100+ page book takes off on American culture and media heroes—staying firmly away from the angst-packed, angry young artist method, and instead revelling in the crude 'n' rude kick-in-the-butt school of wiseassism. And this book provides hours worth of cheap laffs! A fave is Ace's skewering of "The Simpsons" (redubbed "The Simpletons"), with young Bratt Simpleton frolicking in the nude with a dominatrix Nancy, and mom Barge popping up in Screw Magazine. Then he proceeds to take on rock superstars; '60s hippie-types; McDonalds; TV sitcoms (you gotta love the image of Ralph Kramden on acid!); and the best of the lot, "Siskull and Eggbert at the Porno Movies", or when that same dullard duo reviews hits of blotter they just dropped. Ace rags on EVERYONE, and though some of his stuff is hit and miss, I haven't laughed so hard at a comic in a long time. I mean, who else could come up with a TV show idea like "I Love Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds"?...Last (but certainly not least), Glenn Head's **AVENUE D** (Fantagraphics Books; 48 pages; \$3.50) is a barbed read, especially for New York City denizens of the East Village persuasion. This collection of pieces, from '84-'91, takes us through Head's



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funhouse view of reality, and each story is laced with a superbly evil sense of humor that fittingly captures life in this big ol' hellhole. His tales manages to veer from a nightmarish urban monsterland of talking animals like 'Classy' Gator (a pimp) and "Bob the Snowman" (which cleverly takes a Bukowski-esque tale of liquor, dives and rancid romance, and uses a cynical, alcoholic Snowman as the lead character), to more reality-based tales like the apoplectically-warped "Belinda's Topless Go-Go Lounge", in which Glenn unwisely escapes the friendly

atmosphere of Alphabet City in favor of an apartment above a Topless Bar in Brooklyn. And let's not forget the bourbon-drenched "The Bugs", which was a little too close for comfort. Head's drawing style is a flat landscape of twisted geeks and shitheels, fat topless dancers, violent thugs, abused and/or abusive lovers, with writing that's visceral to the bone. Wonderful, demented stuff! —Steve Puchalski

OAK MOT by Rev. Crispin Hellion Glover (Volcanic Eruptions, P.O. Box 25220, Los Angeles, CA 90025). Multi-media auteur Crispin Glover took a break from his astounding film and recording careers to publish this labor of love. And it must've taken him years to accomplish this dark and delicate task. Bound with a sumptuous hard cover, this limited edition is a reproduction of one of Crispin's unique hobbies: Recreating old books. In this particular case, taking a 1860's book entitled OAK MOT, and meticulously reworking the fabric of the narrative. Incorporating doctored photos, his own inserted phrases, replacing entire sections, plus filling every page with twisted pen & ink noodling. And it emerges as an "a story of epic proportions involving pride and prejudice" (or so we're told by the good Reverend), following wheeled



chair-bound Adrys, his twin sister Prosy, and their Uncle Bob. On one level it's a gothic vision of childhood pain and pleasure—but a more disjointed, labyrinthine tale you'll be hard-pressed to find, as the wisp of a story leaps across chasms of illustrations, and often takes on a flavor akin to Burroughs' cut-up technique—though Crispin's direction is less off-handedly random, and more meticulously disconnected (yeah, that makes sense, doesn't it?). Best of all, Glover achieves some hideously beautiful images, juxtaposed with the kitsch phrasing of the original text... Oh yeah, by the end the entire thing somehow arrives in 1926 Deutschland. I won't pretend to understand the thing, but I know what I like. And this is IT. --Steve Puchalski

RAT CATCHING by Crispin Hellion Glover (Volcanic Eruptions). It is apparent to me now more than ever the pure genius of Mr. Crispin Glover. One of, if not THE, most underrated artists of our time, he repeatedly demonstrates his brilliance. He dominates all that is wonderful in life. Because of the way he affects me and I'm sure countless others, I intent to embark on a most serious campaign. CRISPIN HELLION GLOVER FOR PRESIDENT! Although I know not what he believes, I am sure that if any mere mortal is fit to run this godforsaken country—it is HE! After all, any man who uttered the words, "People try to make me sound a lot weird, and I'm strong!", is the man for me. In fact I would like to marry Crispin Glover, and I'm sure I would make a fantastic first lady. That way I could ensure the world that there would be many baby Crispins. Also by the way, RAT CATCHING has a beautiful hard red cover and a number of crisp white pages with some words on them and pictures of half-dissected rodents. —Dina Waxman

NIGHTMARE OF ECSTASY: THE LIFE AND ART OF EDWARD D. WOOD, JR. by Rudolph Grey (Feral House Press, P.O. Box 861893, Los Angeles, CA 90086-1893). This loving tribute to "cultural mutation" Ed Wood Jr. is a wonderful acquisition for any fan of this dime-store genius' incredible celluloid legacy. He was a true American original (who else could've—or much less, would've—considered PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE his "pride and joy"?), and was without question

the greatest transvestite director of all time. It's a strangely structured biography though, because instead of distilling interviews and recollections into a cohesive narrative, Grey simply takes various quotes from Ed's friends and co-workers, and lumps these snippets together. Though this disjointed approach may give the book a round-table quality, it certainly doesn't make for easy reading... Grey reportedly spent over ten years researching this book, and though it's only 231 pages long, he managed to dredge up lots of bizarre tidbits. Sections are devoted to most of his major works, such as GLEN OR GLENDA, BRIDE OF THE MONSTER and NIGHT OF THE GHOULS, and for PLAN 9 he manages to include remembrances from actors Maila Nurmi (a.k.a. Vampira), Paul Marco, and Dudley Manlove! We journey through his skin flick years, grinding out scripts for A.C. Stephen, and there's even mention of his lost nudie epics NECROMANIA and TAKE IT OUT IN TRADE. Of course, there's no happy ending to Wood's tale, and his acquaintances tell heartbreaking stories of Ed's poverty, paranoia and increasing alcoholism... The volume is liberally laced with candid photos from family albums and private collections, in addition to hilarious anecdotes (such as Ed's 3-D Christmas cards, featuring Wood himself as Jesus Christ) and numerous mentions of Ed's true love in life, angora sweaters! But even more astounding are the book's appendices, which not only include a filmography of ALL his movie work, but also a FULL bibliography of the dozens of pulp paperbacks the guy wrote in order to pay the rent throughout the '60s! Trashy titles include "Hell Chicks", "To Make a Homo", "Killer in Drag", and "Diary of a Transvestite Hooker", and Grey not only gives us plot synopses, but also bits of Ed's prose and even several of their lurid covers! WOW!! Rudolph Grey really did his homework on this one, and it's obvious the author has nothing but high regard for Ed, as do so many of his current fans. It's just too bad the guy isn't still around to enjoy it... --Steve Puchalski

HANK, THE LIFE OF CHARLES BUKOWSKI by Neeli Cherkovski (Random House; 337 pages). How could I pass up this book, I ask you? A bio of one of the seminal figures in modern American literature, one of the great drinkers of the twentieth century, not to mention my favorite writer, Charles "Hank" Bukowski. Author Cherkovski is a longtime pal of Buk's, and he tells a tale that appeals to every anti-social, liver-damaged misfit to pick up a pen. And though the book never bores too deep, it's full of hilarious, touching anecdotes which only a character like Bukowski could have lived (and prospered) though. Following a relatively straightforward reportage style based primarily on Hank's own reminiscences, we move through his strict, immaculate upbringing (which later forged his rebellion against the normal work ethic); his teenaged year of severe acne (which began his love of isolation and liquor); and his history of shitty jobs. His life is a mirror image of his stories, with his lean years providing the grimmest bits, such as losing his virginity to a 300 pound barfly, his relationship with Jane (who Bukowski based the Faye Dunaway character in BARFLY on), repeatedly pawning his typewriter, plus a progression of race tracks, bleeding

ulcers, and one-room hovels. During all that time, Bukowski was a disciplined writer, always taking time to churn out a few pages (with a six pack at hand), but it wasn't until his early 40's that he came to the attention of smallpress, literary mags. His no-bullshit, sordid, firsthand tales broke new ground for readers bored with the formality of proper prose, and in chronicling Hank's early career, the book also charts the growth of independent press in America. And of course, by the late '60s the guy had become a counterculture hero (even though he had nothing in common with the hippie ethos), so much so the Post Office actually tried to fire him from his day job after perusing his notorious column "Notes From a Dirty Old Man". Even though much of his later life is common knowledge to his readers (i.e. the years it took to get BARFLY off the ground, with folks like Dennis Hopper and Sean Penn trying to pry the script away from him), Cherkovski dredges up some wonderful tales. Such as how sales of his books skyrocketed in France after Hank went on an uppity frog talk show plastered, and pulled a knife on a security guard. But most intriguing to me, is learning about a 1973 hour-long documentary made by Taylor "The Hack" Hackford, including a wild, booze-drenched reading and a party afterward. Shit, when the hell will this gem surface?!...Neeli wisely avoids making any type of judgement on Bukowski's lifestyle, and never attempts any pompous analysis of his work. None of that drivel is needed in this case, because this chronicle of Charles Bukowski's life is as blunt and honest as one of Hank's early efforts. —Steve Puchalski

JIMI HENDRIX, ELECTRIC GYPSY by Harry Shapiro and Caesar Glebbeck (St. Martin's Press). While it's true that the life and space-times of James Marshall Hendrix have been thoroughly investigated, the extraordinary **ELECTRIC GYPSY** is far and away the best document of the Hendrix phenomenon (much better than the overrated **CROSTOWN TRAFFIC**). Authors Shapiro and Glebbeck have compiled virtually all existing info on General Trips himself, cramming 723 pages with insightful, well-written text on Jimi's upbringing, military hijinx (skydiving with the 101st Airborne), early 'Chitlin Circuit' dues-paying gigs, and finally the mind-boggling recording and performing jag that left headphones blown and jaws dropped worldwide. The amazing reference guide in the back borders on (no, gleefully leaps into) obsessive, with serial #'s of Marshall heads and speaker cab wattage ratings! Go for it! If you aren't experienced when you hit page one, you'll be bonafide by the index. Excuse me while I re-read this book. --Tavis Riker

GENTLEMEN OF LEISURE: A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF A PIMP (New American Library, 1972). If you can judge a man by the company he keeps or his brand of whiskey, I hope no one is judging me (too much, anyway) on the presents I receive. Last Christmas, the tally included a charm bracelet with a tiny straight razor and the head of a goat, a book called **STREETWALKER**, an ancient treatise on the chastity belt, and **GENTLEMEN OF LEISURE: A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF A PIMP**. The text is by Susan Hall and the photography is by Bob Adelman... The interviews in the book are amusing, if a little forced. A portrait emerges of Silky, the main character, as a completely self-centered individual with a talent for hyperbole. He describes himself as a connoisseur of rest and shower-taking. He says he makes more money than the president and he gives his secrets for making women do his bidding. The girls in his stable come over every day to bathe him, massage him for hours, rub lotion on his back, do his hair, clean his apartment, and give him cash. When the women give their side of things, it sounds a little more realistic, if confused. They love Silky, but they hate him as a pimp. He's good in bed, but he doesn't know how to please a woman. Silky is all they want, but they complain of having nothing. They say they're going to leave him, but they call him every fifteen minutes to say where they are going and to tell him where they are. Sadly, they sound like a lot of women, hookers or no, who are trapped by low self-esteem and a charismatic man... Something tells me they made up a lot of this book. Maybe it's just that I don't really want to believe that there used



to be a coupla white chicks sitting around Harlem turning tricks and giving all their money to a pimp named Dandy, who spent it on fur hot pants. Whether the text is made up or not, the photos are priceless. I really dig the photos of Silky and his fellow pimps in their super-fly threads, like the white vinyl suit with the lace-up Robin Hood vest, or the American flag jumpsuit. The pictures of Silky's ladies, Kitty, Linda, Sandy and Tracey, also evoke the early '70s, as the girls cruise the streets in platform shoes, baby-doll dresses and bell-bottoms. A few of the snapshots, such as a very forlorn Tracey smoking a cigarette on a Holiday Inn-type mattress under a ratty blanket, might even make you cry a little. (And I would, too, if I weren't such a cynical, hard-bitten dance hall hostess.) As an added bonus, the authors include a helpful glossary at the end:

bad - good
'ho - whore
party - two girls work on one customer together
coke - cocaine

You really gotta be a savvy, street-smart journalist to be up on that slang... The depressing thing is, I bet some of the whores and pimps interviewed in this book are probably still around, strolling the gutters or at least working in a wig shop on 7th Avenue and missing "the life".

—Mary Schafer, Alert Housewife

KILLER FICTION: TALES OF AN ACCUSED SERIAL KILLER by G.J. Schaefer (Media Queen, 8825 Roswell Rd. #474, Atlanta GA 30350; 70 pages; \$18). Let's forget about wimp serial killer wannabees like Brett Easton Ellis' **AMERICAN PSYCHO**, or even ol' Hannibal Lechter. Because G.J. Schaefer is a convicted murderer presently residing in the Florida State Prison for two mutilation/decapitation killings, and is also connected to 34 dead or missing persons. Or so the cops tell us, that is... Well, the guy's been in the pen for 19 years now, and this collection of savage stories proved to be so twisted and grotesque that some were used to convict him back in 1973. Whether the guy is guilty or not isn't in question here though—it's his skill with a pen. And when it comes to point blank, in-your-face imagery, this is it! Published by Sondra London, Schaefer's high school prom date, most of these tales were written while in "The Hole", and after an intro in which Schaefer pleads his innocence, he gets right to the meat of the matter. One grouping of stories is entitled "Whores: What to Do About Them. Tales

of Human Slaughter and Sexual Depravity". And in the tasteful "Cut Bait", a fisherman kills two "doper sluts" for use as shark food ("I pick up the knife, ram it up the cunt. Twist the blade, turn it, core her hole. Glop and gore splashes out...I rip it up to her breastbone, slash it down to her pubic mound; listen to the gurgle of blood sloshing in her body cavity, mingling with the remains of her lunch."). They certainly won't be adapting this stuff for the Family Channel anytime this millenium. Sections on prison life are a little easier on the palate, including his encounter with Ted Bundy. And here he achieves a crude IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST type of realism. The volume is capped off with the actual tales AND illustrations that helped send Schaefer up the river. The grimmest being "Expecting Dinner", in which a cop (oh, did I forget to mention that Schaefer used to be a deputy?) pulls over a young lady, hangs her, and rapes her several times (by the third go, he "noticed that she was getting cold on the outside but was still warm on the inside"). And besides the fact that it all comes from the mind of a convicted murderer, what makes the work so chilling is the simple fact that Schaefer is a competent writer with an overwhelming attention to detail (usually involving human anatomy). This is probably the sickest read you'll have all year...If you dare! —Steve Puchalski

THE BARE FACTS VIDEO GUIDE by Craig Hosoda (P.O. Box 3255, Santa Clara CA 95055-3255; 452 pages; \$10.95 + \$2 shipping).

In the previous SC, I reviewed the first edition of Craig's guide to nude scenes in the movies. An alphabetical listing all the R/PG videotapes featuring actors/actresses who've dropped their drawers/dresses in order to leave nothing to the imagination. Well, his second edition is out, and it's TWICE the size. Man, this guy's been busy! I mentioned last time that Craig had missed quite a few actresses and films, but with this exhaustive update, I think he's caught just about all of them. And Craig not only tells you how long into the movie each skinshot is, he also rates each sequence, on a 0-to-3 star basis. Everybody's here (whether they like it or not), from starlets like Jennifer Connelly and Jennifer Jason Leigh, to overseas beauties like Maruschka Detmers. And I think the winner this time around is B-movie babe Michelle Bauer, who fills a page-and-a-half. Now THIS is a man who loves his work! An essential purchase for horny videoholics. —Steve Puchalski

SMALL PRESS PUBLICATIONS

BRUTARIAN (P.O. Box 25222, Arlington VA 22202-9998; \$12 for 4 issues—checks payable to D. Salemi). This is a great mag devoted to cult, kitsch and crackpot culture. A gutter-eyed view of the sicker edges of the media, complete with a heartwarming back cover illo of a bovine-like Santa Claus stomping on a wailing baby Jesus. What more could you ask for? In addition to its slick, typeset look, the third edition includes such hilarious bits as cartoons about deviant farmers, and even a wrestling match between Christ and Kris Kringle. But primarily we're inundated with several dozen diverse film/video reviews, ranging from recent dementia like NEKROMANTIC 1 & 2 to good ol' swell

like IT CONQUERED THE WORLD. I love its eclectic mix, from the '50s to the present, from U.S. drive-in trash to obscure Euro-dreck. Gee, just like the type of garbage I enjoy watching! The 'zine also includes plentiful music and book review sections. A good mix of opinions, some fine writers, and a passel of great illustrators combine to make a cool pack of laffs and info. —Steve Puchalski



PANICOS!! (Steve Fentone, P.O. Box 742, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4T 2N5; \$6 per issue). Without a doubt, this is the most incredible fanzine I've laid my eyes on all year! 88 digest-sized pages, each crammed to the margins with pics, reviews and info on nothing but MEXICAN WRESTLING MOVIES!! Sure, the first thing that occurs to you is that editor Steve Fentone must have a little too much free time on his hands, but you soon realize PANICOS!! is, above all, a work of true love. Steve's been softening his brainstem to these wonderful "Mexploitation" flicks for years, and he's only trying to keep the legends alive. All the greats are on display—El Santo, Mil Mascaras, Blue Demon, plus reviews and

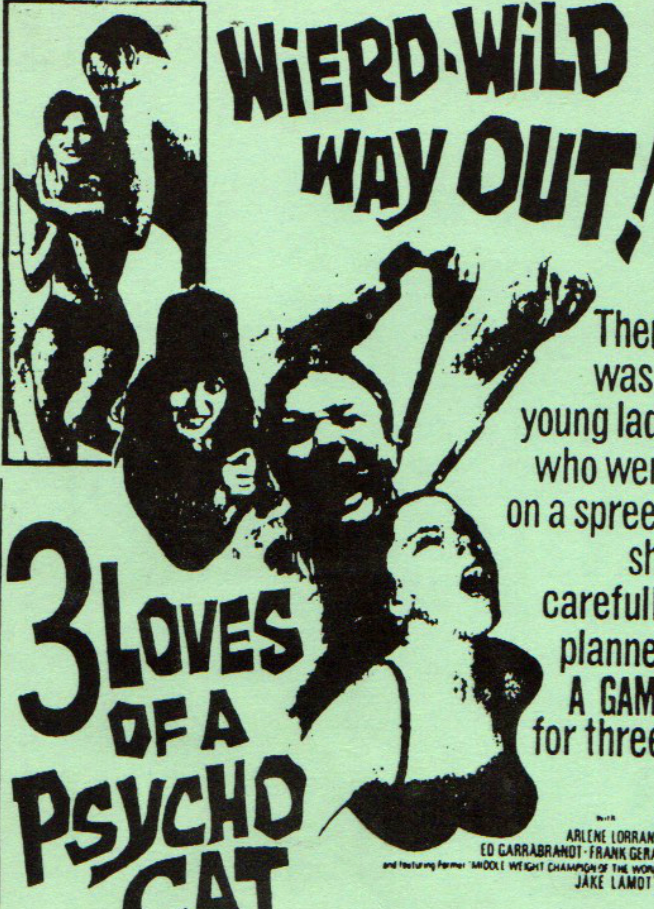
filmographies of many of 'em. And my favorite listing has to be for VIVA CHIHUAHUA, which is "based loosely—VERY loosely—on Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest". The 'zine explodes with old newspaper clippings, original ad mats, panels from comic books, and best of all, lots of hilarious pictures of all the south-of-the-border wrestle-maniacs. This hefty little package (if Fentone keeps increasing its size, the next edition will have to be perfect-bound) is so incredibly in depth it's almost frightening. And I loved it! —Steve Puchalski

HAPPYLAND (Selwyn Harris, 350 6th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215). This is one of the newer rags to come out of the NYC circuit. Several months ago, the editor (who uses the pseudonym "Selwyn Harris", since he doesn't want to take any heat for his opinions) sent me a copy on an evening I was slugging back pints with a couple friends in Selwyn's area of Brooklyn. So we decided to locate his apartment, and meet the dude face to face. We stumbled to his doorstep (in the middle of Brooklyn's interminable haven for yuppies, Park Slope), and encountered some old Nazi war criminal sitting on his front stoop. "Who do you want?" he questioned us, blocking the entrance. "Apartment 4," we slurred, adding "We don't know the guy's real name." The old fart looked at us suspiciously (can't say we didn't look mighty suspicious) and as we tried to go past him, into the lobby, he screamed "Don't go in there!", threatening, "I've got a dog in there!" Rather than deal with this alzheimer's victim, and sick of hanging out in "Selwyn's" upscale locale, I just grabbed a subway back to my little East Village hovel...Oh yeah, I forgot to mention the actual 'zine. Well, to be honest, I've never really been able to get through the thing. It's mostly stories about how cool he is, how everyone else sucks, and it usually reads like it's penned by an arrogant fratboy (you know the type—loud, annoying, NEVER wrong, and five years down the line he'll be just another suit 'n' tie drone). I just wish he didn't have such an overwhelmingly smirky attitude, because the guy's definitely got some great aspects of sleazedom to write about. My only advice is to lighten up, "Selwyn"... —Steve Puchalski

with all the 2nd-income housewives with their bawling brats or the petrified old farts using shopping carts as walkers. Good riddance to 'em all!...So instead, here I am, entrenched in my new SHOCK CINEMA offices, on East 13th Street in Alphabet City (You think I'm gonna tell you my exact address? What are you, insane?), where every overturned car, smack dealer, homeless derelict, and pierced denizen makes me feel at home. Plus, I'm still spending my working hours as the manager and buyer for the Kim's Video on St. Marks & 2nd Avenue, which is probably the only video store in the Northeast where you can find most of the movies I review...The best party of the year was, without any doubt, the Flytrap Warehouse Gig. Even though it was held last June, it's still a fond memory. We arrived early at an abandoned warehouse near the docks of Williamsburg with no idea of what to expect, and the long line was almost enough to turn us away. Snagging a few cold ones from a nearby bodega for the wait, we quickly got the impression this was gonna be one tripped-out event. Perhaps one clue was the outdoor entertainment, which consisted of a giant clear plastic inflated bag, which was used as a projection screen for demented film loops. And once inside, we discovered a Disneyland for the Deranged—a multi-media, interactive mindmelter that had me and my pals wishing we'd dosed up beforehand. Mattress Art hanging from the ceiling. Skeletal sculptures dancing above our heads, manipulated by the pie-eyed partygoers. A guy in a dress writhing in a mud puddle, aided by three bimbos in fascinatingly-skimpy lingerie. Karen Black (the band, not the dame) playing onstage, with Kembra and Annabelle topless and painted blue. A performance art troupe decked out as international symbols, beating each other with dismembered arms and legs. A man covered in empty yogurt cartons. Smoke pouring from giant pipes over the stage as the pit erupts in slam-dancing. A soft playground to sleep it off on, complete with teeter-tooters made of green felt. And banks of TV sets feeding us cathode ray hash. All we could do was roam about, dazed, taking in the sights and sounds of this barrage to the brainpan. My only question: When's the next one?...Only a step down was the Annual Mermaid Parade at beautiful, delapidated Coney Island. Most of the East Village and Williamsburg turns out for the festivities (the one Saturday in the year that we all wake up before noon), and over the years this showcase for home-stitched mermaid costumes has taken on some strange permutations, such as the Mummies dressed as furry-legged neon-hued vikings. But the *raison d'être* were the mermaids—mermaids on stilts, mermaids draped in U.S. flags, mermaids walking lobsters, mermaids poised seductively on top of vans—they were ALL here. And for '91 the King and Queen of the festivities were cartoonist Lynda Berry and Elvez (the Mexican Elvis), who were dragged before the drunken spectators, even as MTV was poking their camera into my face, asking insipid questions (MTV, insipid? Say it ain't so, Steve!). Unfortunately, the interviewer was one of their low-grade toadies who disappears into oblivion after a few months of 'fame', because if it'd been Martha Quinn I would've hauled her ass over to the bar for a couple shots of Cuervos...The only truly fine time I remember about Brooklyn was spending July 4th like every other lazy New Yorker—standing on my roof, squinting to make out the fireworks display over the East River. Well, from the Slope those fireworks were only slightly smaller than your thumbnail, so we were lucky my crazed hispanic neighbors began firing off their own 'little' production. I'm not talking bottle rockets and sparklers, though. These were big fuckin' professional-style fireworks, set off outta garbage cans (a few July 4th's ago a chunk of flying garbage can schapnel nearly killed a guy in front of the Hell's Angels' HQ in the Village). So there we were, hanging over the edge of my roof, watching these suicidal latinos lighting their payloads, which were exploding at our eyelevel! And we were all too blissfully sedated to worry about little things—like the chance that a rocket could go off-course and decapitate one of us as we craned over the rooftop. Ooops. By the end, my neighbors were stripped to the waist and

sweating like bad hams, circling the glowing can of embers and jabbing at it with wooden sticks, trying to ignite any duds. Not actually Mensa candidates, to be sure...Next, I'd like to take a few minutes to bitch about the United Artists theatre chain, who pissed me (and hundreds of other folks) off by lying to their customers. In this case, they began selling seats for a noon matinee at 11:55, with over 300 people waiting outside in the cold since 11:30. I guess their staffers can't count change without their fingers and toes, because it took a full 15 minutes to get one-third of the crowd into the place. And when I entered, I discovered that the film had begun ON TIME! Even worse, the ticket takers were telling customers the film had NOT yet begun (as he told me in his best broken English, "No, eeez steel coming attrachuns"). Well, when their lie was uncovered, I, and about a dozen other rabid filmgoers, stormed the counter, demanded our money back, and informed the long line of imminent ticket buyers that they'd been screwed by United Artists. Of course, the manager was nowhere to be found (the shitpile was probably smoking crack in the back office), and the braindead employees at the Gemini Twin could barely stand erect much less make an independent decision. After far too long, we finally got our refund, and I'll never step foot in that cesspool again. Fuck the United Artists chain. Fuck the doormat-IQ'd staffers at the Gemini Twin. And I urge everyone to avoid these shit-spewing rip-off merchants...But onto something completely different, especially for someone like myself, who hates the very thought of Christmas—surely the most depressing, annoying time of the entire year. But how could I pass up a free seat to the Radio City Xmas Spectacular, especially when it's offered by a lovely young lady? Plus, it's not every day I get the chance to cover this type of middle American bullshit, and I immediately knew we were out place since we were the only people in black leather. The first thing that hits you about the show is that it's BIG! And it's LOUD! And since it was created for vapid, braindead audiences weaned on primetime TV, it continually TELLS you just how uplifting and joyous every fuckin' scene is (sadly, it probably works with all the suburban slobs that surrounded us). Down deep it's just Las Vegas on steroids, with all the Rockettes romping about in bunny fur and shovelled-on make-up—and if you sit close enough you can tell that not one of 'em is under 35 years old. Every scene is more grimacable than the last, and if you're not being bombarded with Teddy Bears dancing to Tchaikovsky, then there are ugly little theatre brats playing with a puppy. The basic premise is to take any holiday tradition that has universal resonance, and funnel it through a crass Macy's Parade sensibility. A Cliff Notes version of the holiday spirit. You get Dickens' Christmas Carol in a record 15 minutes, The Nutcracker in 10 (starring those vomitable ballet-dancing bears), and halfway through it, I wished we had a flask to pass back and forth, because it only could've helped. Especially when they got to the Xmas in NYC sequence, in which we're treated to clean-cut yuppies dancing and singing about the true spirit of Christmas. If they REALLY wanted truth, they should've had The Rockettes decked out as panhandlers, dancing out of refrigerator boxes. Or maybe Santa Claus in red leather bondage gear, shooting skag. Or how about something simple, like Jesus on roller blades? The whole show is so overblown and overbearing and plastic it truly deserves itself. An event that was great to experience once, and only once, for free (followed, in our case, by an immense pitcher of frozen margaritas)...Ooops, I'm almost out of space. In the previous SHOCK CINEMA, I promised to tell you the whole infamous story about the death of my first 'zine, SLIMETIME, but it doesn't look like I'll have room. Because I wouldn't want to condense a tale this good, since it concerns love, anger, betrayal, unemployment, liquor, razor blades, dildos, the Syracuse Police Department, insanity, murder, and "accidentally" shooting someone TWICE with a shotgun. Maybe next time...So until my next issue of SHOCK, don't do anything I wouldn't do (which gives you a LOT of room to have fun). --swp 4/23/92

WIERD WILD WAY OUT!



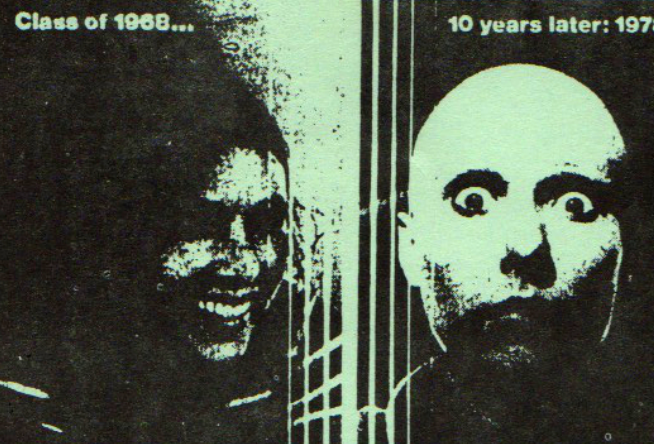
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